

12th Sunday in Ordinary Time - Yr A

[Reading I: Jeremiah 20:10-13](#)

[Responsorial Psalm: 69:8-10, 14, 17, 33-35](#)

[Reading II: Romans 5:12-15](#)

[Gospel: Matthew 10:26-33](#)

Readings may be found on the US Bishop's website:

<https://bible.usccb.org/bible/readings/062523.cfm>



The Gospel passage challenges us to look beyond our fears and place our trust in God. The disciples would be going out and facing great opposition as they shared the Gospel message. They would be opposed by Pharisee leaders who saw their teaching about Jesus as heresy. Later, they would face opposition from Roman society as they challenged the worship of the various gods of the Greek and Roman culture. Even though they will face hardship, their mission was to share the Good News of God's love and compassion for all people. In doing this, they were to fear not.

The call to "fear not," "do not be afraid," and "have no fear" is the most often repeated message in the scriptures. God greets people, angels announce their presence, and Jesus calls the disciples repeatedly to have no fear. God cares for us and has a plan for our good. It may not be the plan we dream of, but it is a plan for life, wholeness, and goodness. One comes to know this plan little by little each day. When things do not go as we plan, Jesus challenges us to trust for not even a single bird dies without God being aware, just as God knows every hair that is on our head.

Jesus begins by calling the disciples to "Fear no one." Jesus is speaking with an eternal view. Yes, there will be suffering and pain, but disciples are called to take the long view. God will be victorious in the end and that is how a person needs to view life. What is one's prime goal? What are the central values that you hold?

Parents sacrifice for their children. Spouses care for each other in difficult times. Individuals sacrifice their goals and plans and sometimes their lives for their nation. These examples show the choice of an ultimate goal over a momentary accomplishment or comfort. Christians are called to take a long view in decision-making. For God is aware of everything and calls each person to fidelity, not only to ideals but to the relationship with God.

Jeremiah was a prophet in the southern kingdom of Judah and was called by God to bear witness to the truth. (Read his call from God: Jeremiah 1: 4 – 10) In the passage for today, Jeremiah has been announcing gloom, punishment, and destruction for Jerusalem which will be fulfilled with the Babylonian conquest of the city. The priest of the temple puts Jeremiah in the stocks, which is on public display to humiliate him. The passage that is read is Jeremiah's prayer after that experience. He recounts what he has experienced but then turns the focus upon God who will bring about his deliverance. He concludes by praising God who will be with him, rescue him, and defeat those who oppose him.

Jeremiah offers a perspective on working through suffering and hardship. He states what is happening as he experiences opposition and mistreatment. Then he calls to mind that God is with him and that God will set the situation right. It will not be by Jeremiah's effort but by God's action. He then gives thanks and praise to God who is always faithful

The second reading is a selection from St. Paul's letter to the Romans. The background is that God made people in His own image and likeness. They were to live the values that were part of who God is. (God is Love, I Jn: 4:16) Humanity has not turned out that way. Drawing on the tradition of our first parents eating the fruit of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, Paul draws the line from them through human history where people have experienced disruption, broken relationships, physical harm, and death. When people choose not to be in union with God but to do it on their own, humanity has experienced all chaos and brokenness.

Jesus reversed the cycle and gave life to all who die to the old and live in the new life that his death and resurrection inaugurated. We are the recipients of that gift. It enables us to live in the way of God. Dying to the old ways, the ways of our culture and society is a process and it is not easy. That is the Christian journey, and it has phases during our life journey. It is not one moment. We make a decision, and then it is letting that way be integrated more and more into us each day. God's gift in Jesus is far greater than what human hearts could achieve.

Themes:

Suffering
Christian Hope

Martyrdom
Fruits of the Spirit

Reflection Questions:

What are some of the fears that complicate your life? What are the challenges that you face?

What are some of your ultimate goals? What are you willing to sacrifice to achieve them?

What does Jesus teach us about suffering? How do you pray when you are suffering?

What are some of the "values" "assumptions" or "high priorities" of contemporary America?

What are the contrasting values of the Christian/Gospel lifestyle?

Have you experienced a great disappointment, but that ultimately worked out in a new and unexpected way? Are you able to see God's providence in that situation?

Prayer Suggestions:

For the Church: that we may live in the confident assurance of God's abiding concern and providential care for us

For the grace of freedom: that God will free our hearts from fear and anxiety so that we may respond with love and concern in whatever God asks of us

For a deeper commitment to the truth: that we may speak the truth that the Spirit has planted deep in our hearts even when we experience rejection and ridicule

For all who are experiencing persecution for their faith: that they may give faithful witness to Jesus and that God will strengthen and preserve them through all suffering and every loss