

12th Sunday in the Ordinary Time (A)
Fear No One!

Jeremiah 20:10-13; Psalm 69:8-10,14,17,33-35; Romans 5:12-15; Matthew 10:26-33

"Fear no one!" This is the theme of this weekend's readings from Sacred Scripture. We all experience fear, and we cannot ignore it. Yet Jesus gives us the courage to overcome it.

There are several forms of fear, and two stand out: acute and chronic fear. We can recall one instance of acute fear: the false alert we received on our cell phones on January 13, 2018. It was a warning of a ballistic missile attack on the Hawaiian Islands. Fear overwhelmed most people then, and it disappeared as soon as the danger passed, leaving us with only a bad memory. It was a false alarm. By contrast, chronic fear is dangerous. It may stem from different layers of life experience and persist within the person, often interfering with the person's ability to function and relax. Of course, this needs careful medical attention, therapy, and prayer.

Fear is healthy and even helpful. It serves a protective purpose; it triggers an instinctive "fight-or-flight" response, enables us to respond quickly to protect ourselves, and sometimes results in remarkable courage and strength. But fear becomes harmful when it prevents a person from living. It is paralyzing and damaging when it causes a person to shut down. It can also become an excuse for inaction. A person who is always anxious suffers twice over. Someone said that anxiety had become the illness of the century, and it is one of the leading causes of the increase in heart attacks.

Yes, we cannot ignore the reality of fear. Fear is real and distinct from other emotions because it is the only one that holds us back. Our Liturgical readings this Sunday offer us a remedy for fear. In our first reading, the Prophet Jeremiah expressed his anxiety about the terror surrounding him and his helplessness before his persecutors. He acknowledged his fears, yet he believed in God and hoped to be victorious over those who threatened to kill him, trusting that God would save him according to his wisdom (cf. Jer. 20:10-13). Likewise, St. Paul is convinced that total faith in Jesus will help us overcome fear and be courageous in the face of adversity (cf. Rom 5:13-15).

Our Lord Jesus summed up all this by telling his disciples that they are valued before God the Father, namely that the Father knows each of them. He says, "Even all the hairs of your head are counted." God doesn't just see us as part of a crowd. He knows each of us by name. He knows our fears, our struggles, and the burdens we carry that no one else sees. If people misunderstand us, God truly understands what we're going through.

Second, Jesus tells us not to be afraid because God cares deeply for us. He says, "Are not two sparrows sold for a small coin? Yet not one of them falls to the ground without your Father's knowledge" (Matt. 10:29). This means nothing escapes God's attention. If God notices even a tiny sparrow, He surely notices each one of us. No one is small in God's eyes. Even if someone belittles you or you think you are ordinary, your value in the eyes of God does not diminish.

Our worth comes from God's love. He says, "You are worth more than many sparrows" (Matt. 10:31). Many people think their worth depends on achievements, money, looks, or success. But Jesus teaches that our true worth comes from God's love. When we know we are loved, we become less afraid. One of the strongest ways we show Christ to others is by trusting God. When people see us facing hard times yet remaining hopeful, peaceful, and faithful, they wonder where that strength comes from. In this way, trust becomes our testimony.

The remedy for fear is to trust God the Father and believe in his providence. It took the disciples time to cultivate the courage of faith, but they did so by God's grace. The same grace is offered to all who learn to surrender their lives to him. St. Theresa of the Child Jesus exemplified this surrender through

childlike trust in God and perfect love. Her words capture it well: "It is the confidence of the little child who sleeps without fear in its father's arms." "To live out of love means to banish all fear." But how do we grow in trust?

First, pray every day. Trust grows through a relationship. The more time we spend with God, the more we learn to rely on Him. When we genuinely rely on God, we do what we can, pray about what we cannot, and leave the rest in God's hands.

Second, remember how God has blessed you in the past. Think about the times God helped you through hard moments, when you found yourself at a crossroads or a dead end, but God led you out. The same God who was faithful before is still faithful today.

Third, let go and take things one day at a time. Many of our worries stem from trying to control everything. Remember the Lord's Prayer: we pray, "give us this day our daily bread." We don't pray for a year's supply. Jesus invites us to trust Him, one day at a time.

The wisdom of St. Philip Neri, from his prayer, is a simple personal prayer to say every day: "Lord, let me get through today, and I shall not fear tomorrow." Or we say, "Lord, I don't know what today will bring, but I know You'll be with me."

Fear may come to us. Worry may show up in our lives. That's part of being human. But let's not let fear or worry take over.

Today, Jesus reminds us to rehearse and repeat again and again: God knows us. He loves us. He sees us as precious. Because God is with us, we are never alone.

When worries start to overwhelm you, remember what Jesus said: "Do not be afraid." It's not because life is always easy, but because God is faithful. Trust Him.

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