

12th Sunday in Ordinary Time-A: Jer 20:10-13; Rom 5:12-15; Mat 10:26-33: "Do not be Afraid: God holds us securely in His loving hands.

There is a beautiful story about a little boy who was walking through a forest with his father. Suddenly, dark clouds gathered, and a strong storm began. The wind blew fiercely, and the boy became frightened. He held his father's hand tightly and asked, "Dad, are we going to be okay?"

His father smiled and replied, "Son, don't hold my hand. Let me hold yours." The boy did not understand at first. The father explained, "If you hold my hand, you may let go when you become afraid. But if I hold your hand, I will never let you go." The boy felt safe because he knew his father would protect him.

In today's gospel, Jesus says "**Do not be afraid.**" Why? Because fear is one of the greatest struggles of the human heart. We fear sickness, financial problems, family conflicts, rejection, failure, and an uncertain future. Into these fears, today's readings bring us a powerful message: Trust in God, for He knows you, cares for you, and will never abandon you.

In the first reading, we see Jeremiah was faithfully carrying out God's mission, warning the people to turn away from sin. Instead of being appreciated, he was mocked, rejected, and threatened. Even his friends were waiting for him to fail. Jeremiah heard people whispering, "**Terror on every side! Let us denounce him!**"

Have you ever felt like Jeremiah? Perhaps you tried to do the right thing, remained faithful to your Christian values, spoke the truth, or defended what was right, only to face criticism, misunderstanding, or opposition. In such moments, it is tempting to give up. But Jeremiah did not quit. He remembered God's promise: "**I am with you.**" Therefore, he boldly declared, "**The Lord is with me like a mighty champion.**" Jeremiah teaches us that faith does not remove difficulties; rather, it gives us the strength to face them. There is no victory for those who quit. God works through those who persevere.

In the Gospel, Jesus prepares His disciples for the challenges they will face. Three times He tells them, "**Do not be afraid.**" Jesus knew they would experience persecution, rejection, and even threats to their lives. Yet He assures them that God's loving care never leaves them.

To illustrate this, Jesus points to the sparrows. They were among the cheapest birds sold in the marketplace, yet not one falls to the ground without the father's knowledge. Then Jesus says something even more comforting: "Even all the hairs of your head are counted." **What does this mean?** It means that God knows every detail of your life. He knows your struggles, your tears, your disappointments, your

joys and your fears. Nothing escapes His loving attention. If God cares for sparrows, how much more does He care for you, His beloved children?

Many of us today carry hidden fears. Some worry about their children or grandchildren. Others are burdened by loneliness, financial stress, family problems, or uncertainty about the future. Jesus speaks directly to these fears and says: "**Do not be afraid; you are worth more than many sparrows.**"

The second reading reminds us of the greatest reason for our confidence. Through Adam, sin entered the world, but through Jesus Christ came grace and salvation. Sin, suffering, and death do not have the final word. God's grace is greater than our fears. Christ has already won the victory through His death and resurrection. God's grace and love are stronger than all these things.

Today, Jesus invites us to trust Him completely. Like the little boy in the story, we may feel afraid when storms come into our lives. But God says to us, "**Let Me hold your hand.**" When we trust in Him with faith, we discover that He is stronger than our fears and greater than our problems.

Therefore, whenever fear knocks at the door of your heart, answer it with faith. Do not focus on the size of the problem; but focus on the greatness of God. Do not measure God's power by your circumstances; but measure your circumstances by God's power. As we continue this Eucharist, let us place all our worries, fears and burdens into the hands of Jesus. Let us remember His words: "**Do not be afraid.**" The God who created us, loves us and knows us by name will never let us go. Amen