

TWELFTH SUNDAY IN ORDINARY TIME (Year A)
6-21-2026 Homily

I. Introduction

Once there was a British story named *Tom Brown's School Days*; it was about a very popular boy named Tom who was a student at an English boarding school. He and a dozen other boys lived in one of the school's dormitories, and Tom—because of his popularity—was one of the most influential people there; the other boys paid attention to everything he said or did. One day a new boy named Jim came to the school, and was assigned to their dormitory. When it was bedtime that night, Jim knelt down next to his bed to say his prayers. The other boys began laughing and making fun of him, and one of them even threw a shoe at him. When the lights were out, they all soon fell asleep—except for Tom. He lay awake in bed, thinking about what had just happened to Jim; he also remembered the prayers his mother had taught him to say every night—prayers which he hadn't bothered saying since he came to the school. The next day the other boys continued making fun of Jim, and some of them even planned on pulling some pranks on him when he prayed that night. However, when bedtime came, something unexpected happened: Jim knelt down to pray, and so did Tom. When the other boys saw Tom kneeling and praying, they didn't carry out their plans; Tom's popularity and influence caused them to see things in a different light (Mark Link, S.J., *Illustrated Sunday Homilies*, Year A, Series II, p. 75).

This simple story, made into an important movie in England, illustrates a very important point: sometimes being a Christian requires us to risk unpopularity by witnessing to our faith, whether in words or deeds. Tom happened to be popular, so it was fairly easy for him to pray along with Jim. If he had instead been unpopular, kneeling down to pray might have turned him into a target too. It still would have been the right thing to do. It doesn't matter whether it's easy or difficult to follow Christ; in the long run, it's always the only choice that makes sense.

II. Development

Life on earth is harder than God intended it to be. His creation was perfect, but it was marred by human sinfulness. St. Paul tells us that through Adam, sin and death entered the world; then, through God's gracious gift of Jesus Christ, love and mercy triumphed. Our sinful inheritance from Adam and Eve—what we call original sin—no longer has to keep us out of Heaven; however, here on earth we are still subject to its effects. One of these unfortunate effects is that we can get into trouble, or encounter opposition, for doing the right thing. This was certainly the experience of the prophet Jeremiah, as the 1st Reading describes. God had given him a rather gloomy message to proclaim: namely, if the people did not repent, disaster would befall their nation. Jeremiah, as you can imagine, did not like announcing this unwelcome and controversial message, but he fulfilled his mission faithfully—and it made him very unpopular and the target of threats, false accusations, and even assassination attempts. Jeremiah persevered, for he knew that the Lord was with him, protecting him and sustaining him. Jesus encountered even greater hatred and opposition than did Jeremiah; knowing that His followers would experience some of the same things, He spoke honestly and directly on this subject. In the Gospel He warns us not to let other people

intimidate us; God's truth cannot be hidden, and we should never be afraid to proclaim it. Other people can hurt us only to a limited extent; we should be concerned with pleasing not them, but God—for He alone has the power to judge us and to determine whether we'll be welcome in His Kingdom. If we're true to His word, we need not worry, for nothing can happen without His consent. Jesus also says, "Whoever acknowledges Me before others I will acknowledge before My Father in Heaven; whoever disowns Me before others I will disown before My Father in Heaven." Thus, it's very important that we be aware of what message our words and example are giving.

III. Conclusion -- Father's Day

Most of us have more influence on others than we realize. Sometimes the importance of our role is very obvious; today's observance of Father's Day gives us a good example of this. Fathers play an almost irreplaceable role in the lives of their children, having a profound influence on their moral and social development. Those of us who've been blessed with good fathers should be eternally grateful for this fact. Many times, however, our influence on others isn't so obvious or direct; a word or action on our part that we consider inconsequential or not worth a second thought may have a lasting effect on someone else. A simple little compliment, sincerely meant, can be a big morale booster for someone in our family; a word of criticism, or a gesture of indifference or dismissal, may make that same family member decide it's not worth the effort to try to please us. A willingness to stand up for what we believe can inspire a friend or acquaintance to do what's right; a desire to avoid getting involved or calling attention to ourselves can reinforce the indifference of other people, thereby letting our society continue to decline almost by default. An honest effort to live out our faith can show complete strangers that Catholicism is genuine and valuable; an attitude of just going through the motions can convince people who observe us that religion isn't all that necessary or important. We are witnesses: either for Christ, or against Him. Everything we say and do proclaims the Gospel, or undermines it; our example makes the Kingdom of God more real and active in the world, or less so.

Sometimes we're presented with a clear opportunity to show whose side we're on, as happened with Tom. He believed in God, but hadn't been praying to Him—until Jim's good example inspired him to use his own influence on the other boys. Whether we're popular and influential like Tom, or unpopular and scorned like Jim, Jesus still wants us to do what we can to bear witness to Him. We can't always know the results or how our good example will be received, but we can be sure of this: if we acknowledge Jesus by the way we live, He will one day welcome us to His Kingdom—and this is a destiny so wonderful that it's worth whatever it costs us.