

## Twelfth Sunday in Ordinary Time

In today's Gospel, Jesus is speaking directly to the twelve apostles but through them he is also speaking to all of us. The command to go out and speak of him is not just for the bishops, the successors of the apostles. We are all sent into the world with knowledge and for others – to let others come to know the word of Jesus. That's what he desires for the whole world. We can't rely just on the bishops to do that. We need all of faithful to go out into the world, proclaim him by word, by deed, by example in every way. In every way, we are called bring people to Christ.

Jesus knows very well that one of the enemy's favorite tactics in intercepting this missionary work is fear. So, three times in today's Gospel, he tells us, *“Don't be afraid.”* He says, *“Fear no one. Fear no one. And do not be afraid of those who kill the body but cannot kill the soul.”* He says, *“Be afraid of the one who can destroy both soul and body in Gehenna.”* So, if we're going to be afraid of anything, then be afraid, let us be afraid of the loss of our soul, the loss of eternal life. But he doesn't want us to live in fear. He doesn't want us to fall victim to the enemy's tactics because we have a Father in heaven who provides all that we need.

We have to be realistic, I think, about these fears that keep us from acknowledging the Lord before others. Maybe there's a fear that the other person isn't going to receive what we have to say, that they might be angry. Maybe we have tried to show them our faith, and they got angry and have said, “No, that topic is off limits.” Well, maybe not. Surely the grace of God can be at work in that situation. Maybe we're afraid that we won't have the words to say, or that, you

know, instead of trying to trust the Lord, we find ourselves without firm ground to stand on. We might be embarrassed in some way. We might fear being labeled as hypocrites because people find out that we are not perfectly whole to the standards we strive for. We are not perfect saints and yet we believe in striving for holiness. There are all kinds of different fears that arise.

Well, it's important to keep in mind, number one, that fear, that kind of fear is not from God. It is the work of the enemy. And the enemy is the father of lies. So, underneath every fear is some kind of lie. And very often, that lie is simply that your father will not take care of you; that you can't trust him. The erosion of trust in God, the Father, is really the root of evil. I mean, it's the original sin. Eve didn't trust, but the enemy said what God told her about the tree of the knowledge of good and evil was not true. In any case, there's always some sort of lie. Perhaps the lie is also that we perceive everything we need to perceive about the person we want to share our faith with. We might preconceive, 'Oh, they're not going to welcome it.' How would you know that? Even if they rejected us before, how do we know that some change hasn't come to change their heart. But we go around with this idea that we know, we know the lay of the land, and you don't want to step on a landmine by proclaiming the Lord to this or that person. So, bring the truth into those places. Acknowledge the truth that the Father cares for us. He knows everything we need and God will provide.

The other thing to remember, besides the fact that fear comes from the enemy, and not from God, is that we can overcome fear not simply through our own strength, but from the remembrance and the reality of God with us, most especially in the Holy Eucharist.

Jesus said, "*Behold, I am with you always.*" Not just in the fact that he is everywhere. You know that there is no place without God. But he has left us the gift of himself in the Sacrament of the Holy Eucharist. So, when we come to Mass we come to Adoration and we do that for a number of reasons. But one of reasons is that in both he is with us, and he dwells in us, and that he's strengthening that communion with us. Not just for our own edification, our own growth and holiness, but that he is strengthening us so that we can share about him out in world.

So, Jesus knows how many times we need to hear those words, "*Do not be afraid.*" I've heard, you have probably heard as well that 365 time in the Bible that phrase "Do not be afraid" is written. I have not counted to be honest with you, so I don't know if that's true or not, but I can say, I need to hear those words every day. I need to hear those words every day "*Do not be afraid*" to go out and share an acknowledge for the Lord and whose goodness and the truth of the gospel. So don't be afraid.

Let me say in a word to fathers today on Father's Day. I just want to encourage you. Don't be afraid to live your vocation as fathers to the full. Be bold and courageous in your fatherhood. There's a lot out there, you know, there's so much confusion and battles being waged over fatherhood and motherhood, and masculinity, and femininity, so much confusion, so much going on in the world. Be strong and courageous and bold as Christian fathers because we need you. We need the example of strong fatherhood.

I always think of this study, I've heard about it a few years ago. It was a study about the children of Catholic parents, and whether they

continued in the practice of their faith. And one of things that the study found was that the children of a couple where the father is practicing, the children are four times more likely to continue practicing their faith than if it is only the mother who practices.

So, no offense, ladies, please do keep on the practice of your faith, but fathers, realize how important your example is in the living of your faith. Be bold, be strong, be courageous. Don't give into any kind of fears that would come up that would undermine your fatherhood.

So, as we continue our celebration of the Mass let us ask the light of the Holy Spirit to bring to the surface in fears that keep us from speaking about the Lord. In our families, or whatever the context is let the Lord bring those fears to the surface and in the celebration of the Eucharist may be we reminded that God is with us, by our side, empowering us to speak on his behalf, to acknowledge him and to really, invite others into a relationship with them.

Lord, give us the grace to overcome the fears, to trust in you in all things as well, the power of your spirit, bear good fruit in and through us.