

The Twelfth Sunday of Ordinary Time Year A Matt 10:26-33

June 25, 2017

Jerimiah is prophet at a time when things are not going very well. He is locked up on orders from the Chief Priest, and Israel is in a shamble. Jerimiah dubs this situation, "Terror on every side" Long before 9/11, Paris, London, it seems there was Jerusalem. The prophet is speaking to disinterested people. Their temple will be plundered and they will all be banished into Babylonian exile for generations. Israel in the period leading up to Jerimiah, had drifted into unfaithfulness once again. Arrest, imprisonment and, public disgrace was this prophet's lot, and Jerimiah sees in Israel's unfaithfulness the sealing of its pending doom. It all appears, a desperate situation to be sure. Aware of the personal danger his ministry had instigated, Jerimiah is nevertheless full of hope and trusting of God.

Have you ever found yourself in a place where you felt destined for failure? A situation with bad and even worse options. Nowhere to turn! The body tenses, the mind scrambles, and the spirit anguishes. Jerimiah's confidence however, even in the face of seemingly insurmountable odds should inspire all, who in whatever capacity, serve as ministers of God.

A child reached their sixteenth birthday, and as many parents know all too well, trouble wasn't very far behind. It seemed home management, which until then had provided security, peace, and harmony had become this child's captor. The child's parents were at a loss, as to what to do. They could see their precious child becoming further and further estranged from the family. At times anguish seemed to crush their very soul. Many good folks offered to help return the regularly disappearing child. But the family lived in a huge city and odds of finding such run-a-way souls are daunting. One night however, after several days, not knowing the where-a-bout's of his child, Dad set off in search. Fear filled his heart. Fear of being labeled an unfit parent. Fear of being physically, emotionally, and spiritually assaulted. And fear of losing control of his normally calm Celtic emotions. Fear is born in pride and gives concern that our weakness might be exposed.

Faith and peace is captured in these situations and held for ransom as we turn instead to dependency on a carbon based and very temporal being. Namely ourselves. Free will alright is the origin of this problem with sin, or missing the mark. Suffering is its addendum!

Damaged relationship, disorder, and injustice are clear indicators of sin's reach. Friends, Women, and men, senior or youth, black or white will always falter detached from God. And left to our own natural and temporal resources, sometimes miserably. Options are only certain, when we are affixed to the Gospel, Sacramental praxis, and the Church's teaching. Gifts of sacramental grace offered freely, are humankind's lifeline. But like any gift these must be claimed, opened and exercise, if they are to have any affect on our lives. Sin quite obviously is an aspect of being human, but it is not one, nearly as powerful as healing, mercy, and love. And friends, it is really death, which enters the human condition shortly after creation, that is humankind's greatest fear. Humankind has many answers and is all too familiar with sin. But, no one answers the question of death, except Jesus, our Christ on a cross, conquering it, leaving empty a tomb, and breathing the hope of eternal and full life upon believers. Christian have hope because in baptism we open our hearts to welcome the Holy Spirit into full-time residence.

But fear is a formidable enemy and Jesus gives words to his followers knowing well the threats they will encounter. This time though, Our Lord does not tell believers to communicate in code or use any type of encryption. Speak with boldness and certainty. Jesus says, don't be afraid of those who kill the body? Not going to be easy! We all want to breath and live to our last moments. How can we not be afraid when we can see, feel, hear, and taste danger before us? It's unnatural. Consciousness triggers all kinds of responses when faced with danger of any type. We could ask the saints and the martyrs how they managed, against the trials and persecution many of them endured. But I think most will tell us that it is faith in God's promise and the acts of Jesus our Christ, that are our strength and hope. Christian suffering is put in perspective by Jesus who assures us of its temporal affect. We might

all have to pray for increased resilience to help endure the many offensives we face. Remembering in parts of the world it remains literally the Christian's life that is at stake.

Sparrows and hair are indeed of minuscule value, yet even these are the concern of our God. Unlike tiny birds and hair, we are treasures before our God who will not let one sparrow fall to ground and who accounts for every hair on our heads. And now you know why Fr Jerome/Fr Johnathon and Deacon Tom don't worry about hair. Grant it we come at the hair thing from different angels, but none-the-less we share one common baptism and one same faith.

And so, Brothers and sisters let us take mindfully and with courage our Christian faith in all its beauty to every part of our world.

Amen