

**Fatherly Courage**  
**12<sup>th</sup> Sunday in Ordinary Time (A)**  
**(Mt 10:26-33)**

When Jesus sent his apostles into the world, he knew they would face opposition and persecution as they testified to the Gospel. And so he prepared them with courage and steadfastness against the intimidation which they would suffer.

It continues to be the case even in a nation which professes “freedom of speech” and “freedom of religion,” that Christians are intimidated and cowered. Public school teachers are afraid to speak of religion, the atmosphere of “political correctness” in the media is severely hostile to Christian values, and bishops are cowered into silence and avoidance of controversy by any threat of lawsuit. The pressure is tremendous.

Jesus tells his followers not to be afraid of this, and to be bold proclaiming in the public sphere (the “housetops”) what they have heard within the privacy of the church. Jesus fully understands the persecution that awaits his apostles as they go forth to all nations, but he reminds them that the spiritual value of the Gospel is greater than the material value of the body, and the things of the body: *“Do not fear him who can harm the body... Fear only Him who can cast body and soul into Gehenna”* (Mt 10:28).

The martyrs who gave their lives for the sake of the Kingdom will receive their bodies back on the day of Resurrection. But there is no hope for those who lose their souls through fear and cowardice. Jesus teaches his followers to fear only one thing: sinning against God by failing to uphold the faith. “Fear of the Lord” is one of the Gifts of the Holy Spirit. It is the only fear a Christian should have. “Courage” or “Strength” is another. It was in the power of these gifts that the Church went into the world on Pentecost Sunday, and it is in this same anointing that the Church must witness to Christ today.

Today we celebrate Father’s Day, where we pray and give thanks for all that our dads have done. The role of the father (and grandfather) is irreplaceable in the lives of his children, particularly with regard to the teachings of today’s Gospel. Those who grow up without the loving strength of a father tend to be insecure in themselves. The father’s teaching and witness completes the lessons of the mother, and seals them with the courage and confidence Jesus speaks of in the Gospel. Every father must help his children and grandchildren learn how to stand fast in the truth, and prioritize the spiritual over the material. In the face of threat and intimidation, the father strengthens his children to stand fast and fight, never capitulate.