

**Homily: 12th Sunday in Ordinary Time: (Jer 20:10-13, Rom 5: 12-15
and Mt 10:26-33)**

Being convinced of the Lord's Mighty Presence in our lives and of our preciousness to Him, let us allow all our "fears" to propel and boost our Christian Missionary lives!"

Five-year old Jack was in the kitchen as his mother made Dinner. She asked him to go into the storeroom (the place where much of the provisions were stored) and get her a can of tomato soup. But little Jack didn't want to go in alone there and cried: "It's dark in there and I'm scared, Mamma." She asked again, and he persisted in his refusal. Finally, she said, "Jack, look... there is nothing to fear in going to that storeroom. Jesus will be in there, with you..." The constant request and this assurance made Jack to walk hesitantly to the door and slowly open it. He peeked inside, saw it was dark, got all frightened and started to leave when all at once an idea came, and he said: "Jesus, if you're in there, would you, please, hand me that can of tomato soup?!"

Well, this little anecdote highlights a common trend that is evident in many of our lives: Fear takes an upper hand in many of our activities and renders us fragile. Fear has a strong grip over our minds and hearts in many situations and makes us weak.

The Gospel of the Day is a clarion call by the Lord to ward off anxiety-causing fears and instead to be courageous in our life as a Christian. Our Blessed Lord gives His instructions to His Apostles as they are being commissioned for the mission journey.

Today He touches upon one of the core emotions that can affect the Disciples in their mission endeavor: the emotion of Fear.

Jesus says, “Fear not, therefore; you are of more value than many sparrows” (Mt 10:30). Jesus seeks to cast off fear from His followers by showing them the preciousness and value of their lives... and how much of importance they are to Him. For this, he presents the example of a sparrow. Though quite strange, Jesus probably had a very pertinent reason for this choice of the common sparrow.

During the time of Jesus (unlike in many of our modern developed cities), sparrows were so common that they were practically worthless. Two sparrows were sold for a ‘cent.’ The word “cent” is the Greek word ‘*assarion*.’ An *assarion* was worth only 1/16 of a *denarius*. One *denarius* was the day’s wage for a rural worker. So, by simple math, a single sparrow was worth only 1/32 of a day’s wage of a rural worker.

Another aspect to be noted is...In Mt, Jesus says, “Are not two sparrows sold for a cent?” (Mt 10: 29). In Lk, Jesus says, “Are not five sparrows sold for a two cents?” (Lk 12: 6). If two sparrows could be purchased for a cent, then a person should get only four sparrows for two cents.

Then why the ‘fifth’ sparrow? Probably the fifth sparrow must have been an incentive offered by merchants to get people to buy more sparrows. The fifth sparrow was given, just merely to sweeten the deal! Our Blessed Lord used this practice of buy-four-get-one-free sparrows to illustrate how much God values life. He emphasizes that said that not even one sparrow is forgotten before God.

Even a nearly worthless free sparrow is not overlooked by God. He takes immense interest even in an unappreciated bird! Therefore, Jesus says, “Fear not, therefore;

you are of more value than many sparrows” (Mt 10:30). When we have a firm conviction of how precious we are to the Lord – Who is All-Powerful and All-Mighty – our every fear will be banished away! When we grow in our awareness that I am really very much worth to God – who is All-Knowing and All-Good – our every apprehension will be relaxed!

In the first reading Prophet Jeremiah – who had to undergone great persecutions – remained staunch and firm by his trust in the Lord and echoed: “But the Lord is with me as a dread warrior; therefore my persecutors will stumble, they will not overcome me!” (Jer 20:11). St. Paul Says in today’s Reading We are invited to grow in the Grace that Jesus has won for us, by His Death on the Cross – and by this Grace, to overcome all our fears of life, knowing that God is in total charge of my life... “For if many died through one man’s trespass, much more have the grace of God and the free gift in the grace of that one man Jesus Christ abounded for many!”(Rom 5:15).

Fear is one of the core emotions that can affect our life as a Christian. Fear takes an upper hand in many of our activities and renders us fragile. Fear has a strong grip over our minds and hearts in many situations and makes us weak. But the deeper we are convinced that I am precious and prized to the Lord, the lesser will be our fears!

“What need I fear, when thou art near, O King of night and day” is a refrain from a Christian hymn! Yes...Fear can either prevent or propel... Prevent from moving forward, being afraid of what will happen. ... Propel to have a stronger determination and rouse the enthusiasm levels. Fear can either be a barrier or a boost: ... Barrier that does not allow any initiative to be taken or any thought-process to progress. ... Boost that accelerates the resolve and willpower and helps march towards the goal. Are we going to let “fear” to PREVENT and act as a BARRIER in our lives? Or can

we, convinced of the Lord's mighty presence in our lives and of our preciousness to Him, let "fear" to PROPEL AND BOOST our Christian Missionary lives....!