

**HOMILY FOR THE XIIth Sunday of Ordinary Time (June 25-2023) Jer:- 20:10-13;
Rom 5:12-15; Mt 10:26-33**

Dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ

Introduction: The Scripture readings for today on the Twelfth Sunday in Ordinary Time challenge us to preach Christ through our words and lives without fear.

“Don’t be afraid! We have four bishops to pray for us.” An elderly woman named Maude had a window seat on a big 747 jetliner that had just taken off for Rome from New York. She had been saving for years to fulfill her dream to visit the Eternal City. But it was her first flight, and she was terrified. Even the stately presence of four bishops seated behind her didn’t help. With fear and trembling she finally opened her eyes and peered out the window, just in time to see one of the plane’s four engines break loose from the wing and disappear into the clouds. “We’re going to die!” she cried out. “We’re going to die!” The stewardess consulted with the pilot who announced to the passengers that everything was under control that they could fly back to New York and land safely with three engines. But Maude continued to cry out, “We’re going to die!” The stewardess went to her and said, “Don’t worry, my dear, God is with us. We have only three engines, but look, we have four bishops to pray for us.” To which Maude replied, “I’d rather have four engines and three bishops!” In today’s Gospel Jesus gives us three reasons why we should not be afraid and why we should have the courage of our Christian convictions.

Scripture lessons summarized: The first reading tells us how the prophet Jeremiah trusted in the power of God while he faced opposition for his prophetic ministry. He was intimidated by attacks upon his character, but he was unafraid to speak out in the name of the Lord. The psalmist in today’s **Responsorial Psalm (Ps 69)** trusts in *God* when he is misunderstood and ill-treated even by his brothers and relatives. **In the second reading**, Paul assures the Christians in Rome that they need not be afraid of opposition both because they share in the death of Jesus and because they are united with Christ, the new Adam, in his Resurrection. **Today’s Gospel passage** is taken from the end of Jesus’ instruction to his disciples as he sends them forth to carry on his mission of preaching and healing. He asks them to live simple lives and to expect opposition and rejection. After having foretold future opposition and persecution, Jesus encourages his disciples to stand firm. Three times they are urged, “*Do not fear!*” “*Do not be afraid!*” Instead of shrinking from their task, they are to proclaim the Gospel boldly, because they will be protected just as Jeremiah was assured of God’s protection. Hence, Jesus commands his disciples not to fear their persecutors. He presents before them the image of the sparrow to reinforce the disciples’ trust and hope in God. The readings hint at the opposition we future Christians will encounter as we carry on the work of Jesus in the world, and they encourage us to persevere in doing the work of Jesus. They assure us that we will be successful, despite the opposition we encounter.

Important messages for personal reflections and prayer:- We need not be **afraid** because our life is in the hands of a loving God. Sometimes we are afraid that we will make a wrong decision. At other times, we are afraid of what others will think when we speak up for Jesus. We are afraid of what the future will bring

for our children. We are also afraid of growing old. Sometimes we are afraid of what bad health will bring us. At the root of these fears is the fear of loss. Every fear we have is grounded in the knowledge that we have something or someone to lose. I can lose my job, family, house, money, health and even life itself. Rejection and loss are the basis of our fears. But we forget one thing: whatever trouble or crisis affects us; we know that God understands it better than we ourselves. Our Heavenly Father knows exactly what is happening. What a relief from fear it is to know that God is on our side; that our life is in the hands of a loving God! The next time fear grips our life we need to remember that being faithful to Christ wherever we meet him in this life is much more important than our fear of rejection and loss. Also, let us take a moment to recall some of the great promises of God. Let us remind ourselves that God cares – we are each a dear child of His, and He cares for each of us. *“Don’t be afraid; you are worth more than many sparrows.”* The last verse of Psalm 27 sums it up nicely: *“Trust in the Lord. Have Faith; do not despair. Trust in the Lord.”*

Thank you. Praise the Lord .Live Jesus

Jokes of the Week;-**Fear of monster under the bed:** A man visited a therapist because he had a fear of monsters living under his cot. The man had been seeing this doctor for months. Every time he would come in, the doctor would ask, “Have you made any progress?” Every time the man would say “No”. The man decided to go and see another doctor. When he went back to his first doctor, the doctor asked, “Have you made any progress?” he said “Yes! I am feeling all better now!” The doctor asked, “What happened?” The man said, “I went to another doctor and he cured me in one session!” The doctor asked, “What did he tell you?” The man said “He just told me to cut off all four legs of my cot and leave no space for the monster!”

No Fear: The devil entered the house of an alcoholic. But the drunkard just ignored him. The surprised devil asked him “Do you know who I am?” “Why of course I know who you are,” the man calmly replied. “You’re Satan.” “And you’re not afraid of me like the others?” the devil asked somewhat puzzled. To which the drunkard replied, “No. Why should I be? I’ve been married to your sister for the last 25 years.

Additional Anecdote for Reflection and Prayer

1: *Tom Brown’s School Days*: This story of an English boys’ school, written in 1857 as a novel by Thomas Hughes, was based on his own experiences as a student of Rugby Boys School. A new boy joined the school. As he got ready for bed the first night, he knelt to say his prayers in a dormitory with twelve other lads. Tom Brown was among them and he was the most popular boy. The other boys were looking forward to making fun of the newcomer. Tom noticed a heavy shoe flying in the air to hit the praying boy. But it missed his head. Laughter and ridicule followed. The incident shook Tom and he could not sleep for some time. He kept thinking of his mother and the prayers she had taught him, prayers he had not said since coming to the school. So, encouraged by the example of the fearless newcomer, the following night Tom also knelt down to pray. The other boys who planned to bully the new boy the second night, immediately noticed what their leader and hero was doing, and they

withdrew with respectful silence. Soon, the courage of two boys won the respect and admiration of the entire class. Here is an example of what Jesus taught his apostles in today's gospel to preach the good news without fear. (Mgr. Arthur Tonne). Watch the Movie: <https://youtu.be/s1MK7YEP-kY> & https://youtu.be/nefs_66p6bI

2) Giraffes afraid of crossing a waterless two feet deep moat: Among the many wonders at the world-famous San Diego Zoo is the giraffe compound. Enclosed in a natural habitat are several of these magnificent animals. They are every bit as tall and graceful as one might imagine. But they are far more massive and muscular than expected. Tall somehow seems to imply thin. However, these great beasts are anything but skinny. Their necks are thicker and their legs shorter and more powerful than one anticipates. It is not difficult to see why one kick could send an ambitious lion packing. Yet these massive, stately animals are enclosed in a small compound that seems far too restricting for their size and power. But no cage contains them. There are no bars or walls. There is but a simple, waterless moat, no deeper than the beast's knee that circles the compound. Freedom is but a mere two steps away. But they are trapped. All of them are. For not one of them will take the risk of stepping down and across for fear of breaking its neck. [Don Martin, *Team Think* (New York: Penguin Books Ltd: 1993), p. 76.] — I wonder how many of us are limited like that by our fears. Fear of rejection... fear of failure...fear of looking foolish...fear of being hurt...fear of being alone... fear of intimacy...fear of being taken advantage of ...fear of change...fear of being criticized. “*Do not fear!*” “*Do not be afraid!*” It is the urgent advice of Jesus to his disciples in today's Gospel.

3) “Shoot Me First.” That's what a courageous 13-year-old Amish girl said to the crazed man who broke into her school on Monday, October 2, 2006. “Shoot Me First.” He did shoot her, killing her along with five of her schoolmates, aged seven to thirteen. Then he killed himself. The shooter, Charles Carl Roberts, a 32-year-old milkman entered the humble one-room schoolhouse with the intent of killing as many students as possible. But one student, Marian Fisher, the oldest of the five Amish girls shot dead that day, tried to buy time for her schoolmates to escape. There were ten of them in all, all girls, five of whom survived. They may owe their lives to Marian who stepped forward and asked her killer to “Shoot me first.” What's more, Fisher's younger sister, Barbie, who survived the shooting, allegedly asked the gunman to, “Shoot me second.” — It is a story of incredible courage. Maybe our Amish friends have some things to teach us about how to raise young people. (Rev. King Duncan).

4. “Sharing the cup of the Lord's suffering” The diocese of Rome, Italy, is called the “apostolic see” because it was at Rome that Peter and Paul preached the Faith, and it was at Rome that they were martyred. “By sharing the cup of the Lord's suffering,” says today's entrance antiphon, “they became the friends of God.” Jesus had predicated Peter's eventual capture and execution on the same day that He gave him charge over his sheep and lambs. “*When you are old,*” he told Peter, “*you will stretch out your hands, and another will fasten your belt for you, and carry you where you do not wish to go*” (Jn 21:18-19). History testifies to Peter's death on a cross – a cross set upside down in the earth because Peter felt he did not deserve to die in exactly the same way his Master had.

In addition to a few pieces of historical evidence of St. Peter's death, there are also some legends. Especially touching is the *Quo Vadis* legend, which dates from around 200 AD. According to this story, one of Peter's Roman converts was Xantippe, wife of the pagan

Roman magistrate Agrippa. Albinus, a friend of Emperor Nero, urged Agrippa to seize and execute Peter as leader of the hated Christians. Xantippe, learning of the proposal, hastened to warn Peter. She and other leading Roman Christians urged him to escape from Rome. "Shall we be put to flight, brother?" Peter asked sternly. Was he to play the coward? "No," they insisted, "but that you may be able still to serve the Lord." Peter thought awhile and saw their point, but he would not allow them to accompany him. "Let no one of you depart with me, but I will go out alone, for I have changed my purpose."

However, Peter had not got far outside Rome's Appian gate when he suddenly saw Jesus walking the Appian Way towards Rome. "Lord," cried Peter, "Where are you going?" ("*Domine, quo vadis*"?) Jesus answered, "I am going to Rome to be crucified." "But, Lord," Peter replied, "Were you not crucified once?" The Master replied, "I saw that you were fleeing from death, and I am willing to be crucified in your stead." Peter got the point. "Lord, I will go. I will do your bidding." "Fear not," Jesus reassured him, "for I am with you." Then He vanished. Peter returned to Rome, no longer confused or fearful, but joyful. He knew that the time had come for Christ's prophecy about him to be fulfilled. So, it was the cross for Peter. He who had fled from Christ's Calvary found his own Calvary on Vatican Hill. (Father Robert F. McNamara).

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