

Do Not Fear Those Who Can Kill You (12th Sunday in Ordinary Time, Year A)

Jeremiah 20:10-13—Jeremiah’s Enemies Plot His Death

1. Context: the “Word of the LORD” is like a “burning fire shut up in my bones” (20:7-8)
2. Jeremiah’s Prophecies of Destruction: lead even “friends” to seek his death (20:9-12)
3. He Cries out for “deliverance” from the hand of “evildoers” (20:13)

Psalm 69—Lord, in Your Great Love, Answer Me

1. “Zeal” for God’s “House” (=Temple) Consumes the Psalmist (69:9)
2. Therefore he becomes “a stranger” to “my brethren” and “alien” to his “mother’s sons”
3. Prayer for Deliverance: the LORD “hears” the needy and poor

Romans 5:12-15—Through One Man Sin and Death Entered the World

1. The Fall: Through “One Man” (=Adam) Sin and Death entered “the world” (5:12)
2. Adam: a “Type” (Greek *typos*) of “the One Who Was to Come” (=Christ) (Typology)
3. Jesus Christ: the “One Man” through whom “Grace” comes

Matthew 10:26-33—Do Not Be Afraid of Death

1. “Have No Fear”: Why Not?
 - a. Everything Covered → will be Revealed
 - b. Everything Hidden → will be Known
2. Do not fear those who can
 - a. “Kill the body (Greek *sōma*)”
 - b. But cannot kill the “soul” (Greek *psychē*)
3. Who Should You Fear: “him who can destroy both soul and body in Gehenna” (10:29)
 - a. Satan? (cf. Eph 6:11; James 4:7; 1 Pet 5:8-10)
 - b. Or God? (cf. Isa 8:12-13; Exod 20:20, holy “fear of the LORD”)
4. The Father, the Sparrows, and the Hairs on Your Head
 - a. Providence: Not a sparrow (=1 penny) dies apart from the Father’s “will”
 - b. Omniscience: Hairs on Your Head: “all numbered”
 - c. Therefore, “fear not”: “*You are of more value than many sparrows*”
(Note: Why is everyone so afraid these days? Because we do not value life...)
5. Bearing Witness to Christ
 - a. Whoever “acknowledges me” before others → “I will acknowledge”
 - b. Whoever “denies me” before others → “I will deny” before the Father

The Necessity of Bearing Witness to Christ Even in Persecution

The disciple of Christ must not only keep the faith and live on it, but also *profess it, confidently bear witness to it, and spread it*: “All however must be prepared to confess Christ before men and to follow him along the way of the Cross, amidst the persecutions which the Church never lacks.” *Service of and witness to the faith are necessary for*

salvation: “So every one who acknowledges me before men, I also will acknowledge before my Father who is in heaven; but whoever denies me before men, I also will deny before my Father who is in heaven.” (CCC 1816)

Questions for Discussion and Reflection (Corpus Christi, Year A)

1. Reread the description of the prophet Jeremiah’s betrayal and persecution by his former friends (Jeremiah 20). Have you ever found yourself in a similar experience of rejection for the sake of the Gospel by those you trusted? How did you handle that situation?

2. The Bible says over and over again that “the fear of the Lord” is the “beginning of wisdom”? What is the different between a healthy and unhealthy “fear” of the Lord? (See CCC 2144, 2217, 1303, 1831, 1041).

3. What do you think of Jesus’ teaching that it is necessary to “acknowledge” him in order to be saved (Matt 10:32)? Given the current situation of persecution of Christians in the world, how can we pray in solidarity with those who are being persecuted and killed for their faith? (Consider praying Psalm 69 on behalf of the persecuted Christians throughout the world).

For Further Study

1. CCC 268-274, 302-314: One reason it is easy to fall into fear of death is because we forget that we believe in God, the Father “Almighty.” Review the Church’s teaching on God’s omnipotence and providence and reflect on it.
2. John Allen. *The Global War on Christians* (New York: Image, 2016). A sobering and well-documented book on the world-wide phenomenon of Christian persecution and martyrdom. Must reading for Western-Christians who assume martyrdom is a thing of the past.