

12th Sunday in Ordinary Time

Homily

I read a story once about a woman who once went to a psychiatrist to discuss her fear. "Every time I lay down on my bed," she said, "I get this terrible fear that there is something hiding underneath."

The psychiatrist told her that hers was an interesting fear and that it would take about 20 sessions to work through it. The woman asked how much a session would cost, and when she learned it would be £100 each time she went home to discuss the doctor's recommendation with her husband. Her husband, not wanting to spend that kind of money decided to take matters into his own hands – he went into the shed, grabbed his toolbox and sawed off the legs of the bed! Problem solved.

Fear is an interesting thing. Sometimes our fears can be rather silly and easily solved, but other times they are quite real and quite difficult to face. We fear spiders, and lightning and disease. We fear terrorism and other senseless acts of violence. We fear that our money might not last us through retirement. We fear the unknown... beginning at a new school, starting a new job, moving to a new town, and the list goes on and on.

In the Gospel reading for today, Jesus speaks to his disciples about fear; the fear of being persecuted for their faith in him. Jesus had been training his disciples to go into the world and preach his message of forgiveness and salvation through him. That might sound easy enough but the disciples did not live in a time of tolerance. They knew that it would be difficult to convince other Jews that Jesus was indeed the Messiah for whom they'd been waiting, and they also knew that if their witness caused unrest among the people, the Romans would oppose them as well.

Jesus knew that they would face terrible persecution and that eventually most of them would indeed give up their lives for their faith in him. Yet he says to them, "Do not fear. Do not fear those who kill the body but can not kill the soul."

Jesus knew too how very much God loved his children and he knew that even

though there would be difficult times, his disciples would be supported through it all by a loving God and by the presence of the Holy Spirit. Jesus knew that God's love would win out in the end and so he could tell his disciples to be bold in their preaching, and teaching and healing, and trust that God would guide them each step of the way. And they did.

As we share the Gospel with others we don't have to deal with government-ordered executions, but we DO live in a time of increasing hostility to the Christian faith. Christianity is ridiculed by a fast-growing, vocal minority in our culture that desires to silence Christians. A growing number of militant atheists attempt to dispel the so-called "Myth of God" and do away with our silly superstitions and ridiculous beliefs. Their project is to mock *any* faith, but Christ and those who are faithful to him, can expect no mercy.

And so today Jesus tells **us** that we need not be afraid. "Don't be afraid to share the story. When you proclaim my love for all the world, I will be with you. You may be asked to go where you would rather not go for my sake, but you never go alone.

Just as much as he wanted the Twelve to do it, Jesus wants **us** to tell the story of his love. to care for others in his name, to bring others to know him. Confident in Jesus's promise to be with us, let's do just that and not be afraid.

Prayer of the Faithful

Let us bring the needs of the Church and the world before our Father in heaven.

Let us pray for the Church: that all her children may be prepared to suffer discomfort and ridicule for the name of Jesus. Lord, in your mercy **hear our prayer.**

Let us pray that those who work for justice and life and peace may not be intimidated, but speak the truth in the name of God. Lord, in your mercy **hear our prayer.**

Let us pray for a greater understanding in our society of the sacredness of human life: that all may be treated with respect and have their God-given dignity acknowledged. Lord, in your mercy **hear our prayer.**

Let us pray for the sick, the injured and the bereaved: that they will know how precious they are in God's sight. Lord, in your mercy **hear our prayer.**

Let us pray for pregnant women who feel they are faced with a difficult decision: that they may be given hope, filled with the love of God, and guided away from a course of despair into one of love and acceptance of the gift of life. Lord, in your mercy **hear our prayer.**

Let us pray for all fathers: that God the Father will give them the guidance and strength they need to raise happy and holy children, grounded in a love for God and other people. Lord in your mercy **hear our prayer.**

Let us pray for the dead; for those who have died recently, especially Anne Sweeney whose funeral takes place this week, and for Glenys Magill and Fidelis Zikpi, and for all departed fathers: that the grace of God will purify them and bring them rejoicing into heaven. Lord, in your mercy **hear our prayer.**

Let us now lift our hearts to the Lord in a moment of silent prayer.

Almighty God, you have made us for yourself, and our hearts are restless till they find their rest in you: pour your love into our hearts and draw us to yourself, and so bring us at last to your heavenly city where we shall see you face to face; through Jesus Christ our Lord.