

25 June 2017 (12th Sunday in Ordinary Time, Year A)

Jeremiah 20:10-13; Psalm 68(69):8-10,14,17,33-35; Romans 5:12-15; Matthew 10:26-33.

Do not be afraid!

What are we afraid of? Why does Jesus tell us not to be afraid?

After the Lent and Easter period, we now go back to the Sundays in Ordinary Time where we join the group of disciples as they travel with Jesus taking in his various teachings. We have already started this in the Sundays between the Epiphany and Ash Wednesday, so now we take up the journey again. We find ourselves in the middle of what is referred to as the missionary discourse in the gospel of Matthew. Jesus sent out his disciples to give witness and to preach the good news. The Jewish Christian community reading this gospel knew that it was not easy to preach the message of Jesus and they were struggling with this concept. In the face of opposition from other Jews who had refused to listen to the gospel of Jesus, the community of Matthew was faced with two options, to run away or to keep witnessing.

In many ways this is a situation that faces us and our Church today. Even though we live in a culture that is heavily influenced by Christian values, we often encounter people around us who are not open to listen to the good news of Jesus. These people may at times be members of our own families, in our group of friends, people we work with, or other people we encounter. Like the disciples at the time of Matthew, we too have a choice; we can either continue to speak out and give witness to the Christ we believe in, or we can turn away.

If we choose to stand up for what we believe in, we know that often we will be facing opposition even from among those we love, and this puts us in an awkward position. Jesus tells us not to be afraid because we know that we are in the embrace of a loving God who cares even for a worthless sparrow. Part of our journey of discipleship is for us to trust and believe that God will stand beside us even when things seem difficult for us.

As a Christian and a disciple of Jesus we are invited to live according the values that Jesus taught us, to love those around us and to reach out to those less fortunate. In a multicultural society with people coming from different faiths and cultures, at a time when we often feel insecure by the threat of terrorism that we see on the news and around us, it is easy for us of isolate ourselves and turn against those who need our support.

If we accept to make ourselves vulnerable in front of others, we know that we have our God to rely on. Yes, our physical life may be threatened, but our life in God is secure. We may have to lose friends who struggle when they see us open and welcoming towards those less fortunate, but we know that our security lies in the love of God.

Jesus promises that if we stand strong and give witness to his teaching, especially by the way we live our own life, then he will stand for us in front of his Father. Our life here on earth is only a part of the full reality that is fullness of life in God.

Do not be afraid, God is stronger than any difficulties that can come our way.

Fr Mario