

TWELFTH SUNDAY IN ORDINARY TIME

CYCLE A

Jeremiah 20:10-13

Romans 5:12-15

Matthew 10:26-33

(The bible and several unlit candles rest on a cloth-covered table in the gathering place.)

OPENING PRAYER

(The candles are lit. The leader invites members to collect their thoughts and to rest in the presence of God. After a time of quiet, the community prays as follows.)

Leader: For your sake I bear insult,
and shame covers my face.
I have become an outcast to my brothers,
a stranger to my mother's children,
because zeal for your house consumes me,
and the insults of those who blaspheme you fall upon
me.

All: Lord, in your great love, answer me.

Leader: I pray to you, O LORD,
for the time of your favor, O God!
In your great kindness answer me
with your constant help.
Answer me, O LORD, for bounteous is your kindness;
in your great mercy turn toward me.

All: Lord, in your great love, answer me.

Leader: "See, you lowly, ones, and be glad;

you who seek God, may your hearts revive!
For the LORD hears the poor,
and his own who are in bonds he spurns not.
Let the heavens and the earth praise him,
the seas and whatever moves in them!"

All: Lord, in your great love, answer me.

Psalm 69:8-10, 14, 17, 33-35

Leader: Lord Jesus Christ, you loved us and delivered yourself up for us as an agreeable sacrifice to God. Teach us to live as people of the light, in goodness, justice and truth. Remind us that you are present among us always.

All: Amen.

(Members join in singing, "Be Not Afraid;" available on the Internet.)

COMMENTARY

Jeremiah tells us, "All those who were my friends are on the watch for any misstep of mine. Jesus said to the twelve: "Fear no one."

Both the first reading from Jeremiah and the gospel project a world of fear, whisperings, denial, darkness and secrecy. In reading and pondering both, there is a sense of uneasiness, injustice, hostility. We are caught in a world of ambiguity. But Jesus says in the gospel, "Do not be afraid of those who kill the body, but cannot kill the soul; rather be afraid of the one who can destroy both soul and body in Gehenna."

Take a moment to think about your fears. What do you really fear? Why? How deeply do you believe when Jesus tells us, "[D]o not be afraid; you are worth more than many sparrows"?

This is an important message for each of us. It is a message about God's providence. Jesus lifts up the inestimable value of each individual in the eyes of God by setting the person alongside God's care for each little sparrow. God's care for the elect exceeds even the rest of his beloved creation.

Earthly profession of Jesus merits heavenly commendation. Jesus calls for courage in face of all human and worldly threat. How often we are afraid – even of little things as well as major dangers. “Do not be afraid,” says Jesus; “Stand with me. I will acknowledge you before my Father.” The message in this gospel is direct: stand firm in faith. Live with courage. Know that God is with you.

FAITH SHARING AND INTEGRATION

- ◆ Name some things small and some things big of which you are afraid.
- ◆ Tell of a time when you or someone you know trusted in God in an impossible situation.
- ◆ Recall an occasion when you knew that in God’s eyes you were worth more than many sparrows.
- ◆ When have you witnessed a good person vindicated in spite of opposition?

RESPONSE IN ACTION

- ◆ Seek out an opportunity at a regional cancer center to offer encouragement and hope to folks who are living in the grip of this illness.
- ◆ Google “domestic abuse“ and the name of your state to locate some place in your area that supports people suffering from abuse. Participate in some way in the work of that center.

SENDING FORTH AND CLOSING PRAYER

(The leader invites members to a time of silent prayer. After some minutes, the leader invites prayers of praise, thanksgiving and petition. To each prayer, members respond, “The Lord is with us, like a mighty champion.” When the prayers are complete, the leader prays as follows.)

Leader: O God of light and glory, you are the consolation we seek, the power to whom we entrust ourselves, the love for which we long. Let us feel your presence as we turn to you in our need. In Jesus’ name, we pray.

All: Amen.