

Your Lourdes Sunday Liturgy at Home

12th Sunday in Ordinary Time

June 21, 2020

“Be Not Afraid”

Each of us was baptized to share in Christ’s prophetic ministry. We are called to stop and ask ourselves if we are willing to step into the space where the Way of the World contradicts the Way of the Gospel and conclude “It doesn’t have to be this way.” Our baptismal vows call us to love our world enough to be part of making it what God created it to be. And that can seem scary.

Today’s Gospel passage from the tenth chapter of Matthew wants us to fear not. Jesus says:

- “Fear no one” (verse 26)
- “do not be afraid” (verse 28)
- ‘do not be afraid” (verse 31)

Yet we live in tumultuous times with many forces coming at us – pandemic and recession, climate change and maldistribution of wealth, political division and a needed focus on racism. We seemingly have lots to fear, and even more to lament!

We can turn to Scripture for classic “How to” texts on lamentation. At least 42 of the 150 Psalms are ones of lament – 30 of individuals and a dozen more of communal lament. The Biblical scholar Walter Brueggemann asserts that laments give “formfulness to grief.” And they follow what Brueggemann detects is the chaotic stages of grief that Elisabeth Kübler-Ross identified. They bounce around among denial and depression, cajoling and bargaining, acceptance and resignation to end up with hope and praise.

The Prophet Jeremiah has long been associated with lament. In fact, the Book of Lamentations is attributed to him, even though it was probably written by “anonymous poets and survivors of the destruction” of the Temple, according to Lourdes’ own resident Jeremiah scholar, Dr. Kathleen O’Connor, in her book, Lamentations & The Tears of the World. He laments in today’s passage, which is a portion of what some call one of his five Confessions. Kathleen O’Connor calls it a prayer. Jeremiah’s outcry feels like the anguish

recorded in a prayer journal and ripped out and patched into the book. Pashur the high priest has denounced him for his warning that Babylon would soon overrun Jerusalem and take the leadership class into exile.

Kathleen O'Connor writes in her longer study of the prophet (Jeremiah: Pain and Promise): “Jeremiah’s confessions are laments, that is prayers of complaint to God similar to laments in the book of Psalms. In them, his relationship with God balances on the breaking point. But ultimately, his prayers – in all their bitterness and anguish – keep that relationship alive and teach readers how to move through the frightening spiritual wreckage left by disaster. By clinging to God in their own thick jungles of pain, God and they might together survive the cataclysm. And like the biographical stories, Jeremiah’s confessions expand his prophetic role from that of adversary to his people. They serve as instruments of communal survival.”

A high school English teacher would flunk the editors of Jeremiah for its utter chaos in organization. The mixture of prose and poetry, history and confession is made more complex by its ricocheting chronology. Kathleen O'Connor asserts that “Trauma and disaster studies suggest that Jeremiah’s bewildering shape reflects the massive disorder that produced the book in the first place....Disasters create turmoil in nearly every realm of life, and that turmoil finds expression in Jeremiah’s rugged contours and blue-printless architecture. The book’s very conflicts and confusion require that readers become meaning-makers themselves as they try to make sense of the literature.”

One wonders what accounts of these past few months and years in our lives will look like? Will they be as jumbled and volatile as the Book of the Prophet Jeremiah? Probably. There are lots of “sea changes” going on in the body politic and in societal attitudes about racism, sexual discrimination, climate change and economic justice. The 19th Century had a Great Awakening. Maybe we are experiencing a “Great A-woke-ning”. Whatever is happening, God is there, calling us to “Be not afraid.”

Prophecy has punch. It usually alienates when people feel accused. But it does spur conversion. Pope Francis quoting St. John

Chrysostom: “Not to share one’s goods with the poor is to rob them and to deprive them of life. It is not our goods that we possess, but theirs.” Let the church say.....OUCH! That’s a prophetic statement that lets nobody with two coats off the hook. It says that when you encounter the poor you either robe them or you rob them.

In our reading from the Letter to the Romans today, Paul is addressing one of the most basic questions of religion: how evil came to be so prevalent in a good creation. Some contemporary theologians offer a social perspective on the spread of Adam’s sin. They assert that once sin has come into the world, no one is free from its contagion. In The Compendium of the Social Doctrine of The Church (2004), we read that “The consequences of sin perpetuate the structures of sin ... which grow stronger, spread and become sources of other sins” (#119). Examples of structures of sin include racism, materialism, an all-consuming profit motive, and the drive for power. We can easily see how these institutionalized instances of sin bring death and deform the human spirit. These and other sinful attitudes and structures are as visible and powerful in our world as their historical counterparts were in Paul’s day.

Biblical commentator Mary McGlone emphasizes that “a focus on sin misses the major point that Paul is trying to make.... Paul believes and proclaims that Christ’s life, death and resurrection have transformed reality in such a way that alternative structures have become possible.”

Clearly, the disciples’ lack of fear can’t be based on external evidence or on naiveté. Jesus sends them out fully aware of what they are facing. They are being sent to proclaim what they have heard and to do what they have seen. They are to share what has sparked their hopes and deepened their faith. By giving them his mission, Jesus pushes them into the necessary next step of discipleship. It’s one thing to stand by and admire what Jesus says and does, it’s quite another to say and do the same. But, the reality is that only by taking up the mission can they be disciples. Jesus is not a one-man show. Anybody who wants to watch from the sidelines will never be more than a spectator. Being part of the dynamic of the coming of the reign of heaven requires active participation.

Readings for 12th Sunday in Ordinary Time, Year A

1st Reading – Jeremiah 20:10-13

¹⁰ Jeremiah said: “I hear the whisperings of many:
‘Terror on every side! Denounce! let us denounce him!’
All those who were my friends are on the watch
for any misstep of mine. ‘Perhaps he will be trapped;
then we can prevail, and take our vengeance on him.’

¹¹ But the LORD is with me, like a mighty champion:
my persecutors will stumble, they will not triumph.
In their failure they will be put to utter shame, to lasting,
unforgettable confusion.

¹² O LORD of hosts, you who test the just,
who probe mind and heart,
let me witness the vengeance you take on them, for to you
I have entrusted my cause.¹³ Sing to the LORD, praise the LORD, for
he has rescued the life of the poor from the power of the wicked!”
The Word of the Lord.....Thanks be to God.

Responsorial Psalm – Psalms 69:8-10, 14, 17, 33-35

R. (14c) Lord, in your great love, answer me.

⁸ For your sake I bear insult,^[L]and shame covers my face.^[SEP]
⁹ I have become an outcast to my brothers,^[L]a stranger to my
children,^[SEP]¹⁰ Because zeal for your house consumes me,^[L]
and the insults of those who blaspheme you fall upon me.^[SEP]

R. Lord, in your great love, answer me.

¹⁴ I pray to you, O LORD,^[L]for the time of your favor, O God!^[SEP]
In your great kindness answer me,^[L]with your constant help.^[SEP]
¹⁷ Answer me, O LORD, for bounteous is your kindness;^[L]
in your great mercy turn toward me.^[SEP]

R. Lord, in your great love, answer me.

³³ “See, you lowly ones, and be glad;^[L]you who seek God,
may your hearts revive!^[SEP]³⁴ For the LORD hears the poor,^[L]
and his own who are in bonds he spurns not.^[SEP]³⁵ Let the heavens and
the earth praise him,^[L]the seas and whatever moves in them!”^[SEP]

R. Lord, in your great love, answer me.

2nd Reading – St. Paul’s Letter to the Romans 5:12-15

¹² Brothers and sisters: Through one man sin entered the world, and through sin, death, and thus death came to all men, inasmuch as all sinned ¹³ for up to the time of the law, sin was in the world, though sin is not accounted when there is no law.

¹⁴ But death reigned from Adam to Moses, even over those who did not sin after the pattern of the trespass of Adam, who is the type of the one who was to come.

¹⁵ But the gift is not like the transgression. For if by the transgression of the one the many died, how much more did the grace of God and the gracious gift of the one man Jesus Christ overflow for the many.

The Word of the Lord.....Thanks be to God.

Alleluia – John 15:26B, 27A

R. Alleluia, alleluia.^{[L] [SEP]}

^{26B} The Spirit of truth will testify to me, says the Lord;^{[L] [SEP]}

^{27A} and you also will testify.

^{[L] [SEP]}**R. Alleluia, alleluia.**

Gospel – Matthew 10:26-33

²⁶ Jesus said to the Twelve: “Fear no one. Nothing is concealed that will not be revealed, nor secret that will not be known.

²⁷ What I say to you in the darkness, speak in the light; what you hear whispered, proclaim on the housetops.

²⁸ And 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.

²⁹ Are not two sparrows sold for a small coin? Yet not one of them falls to the ground without your Father’s knowledge.

³⁰ Even all the hairs of your head are counted.

³¹ So do not be afraid; you are worth more than many sparrows.

³² Everyone who acknowledges me before others I will acknowledge before my heavenly Father.

³³ But whoever denies me before others, I will deny before my heavenly Father.”

The Gospel of the Lord.....Praise to you Lord Jesus Christ.

Listen to Mississippi Children's Choir – “His Eye Is On the Sparrow”

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Q_8pUqXADTE

Reflection Prompts

1. What frightens you most and causes you to lose hope at times?
2. Do you have a special image (like the sparrow) that restores your confidence and hope?
3. What structure or system is God calling you to help transform?
4. Finish with this meditation:
 - a. Imagine God caring for all of creation, including tiny sparrows.
 - b. Let God tell you about your great worth in God's eyes.
 - c. Tell God about the fears you have and then surrender them into God's hands.
 - d. Conclude your meditation with praise and thanks, letting God's spirit empower you.

Then after a pause of contemplative ease and silence, move into the intercessions, followed by singing or reciting The Lord's Prayer.

GENERAL INTERCESSIONS – June 21, 2020 TWELFTH SUNDAY IN ORDINARY TIME

Presider: Jesus exhorts us to “be not afraid.” Let us pray now for all who live under any kind of fear.

Worship Leader

1. For all in the church: that we may live the Gospel fearlessly. We pray: **Calm our fears, O God.** (RESPOND: **Calm our fears, O God.**)
2. For all fathers, stepfathers, uncles, godfathers and grandfathers; for all men who guide young people; for their strength, tenderness, and courage. We pray: **Calm our fears, O God.**

3. For fathers who have lost a child through death, that their faith may give them hope, and their family and friends support and console them. We pray: **Calm our fears, O God.**
4. For fathers who have died, that God may bring them into the joy of his reign, we pray to the Lord. We pray: **Calm our fears, O God.**
5. For those at risk for supporting believers of other faith traditions, especially Judaism and Islam. We pray: **Calm our fears, O God.**
6. For those whose work or personal commitments require extraordinary courage; for all who take risks for others, especially in this time of pandemic. We pray: **Calm our fears, O God.**
7. For healing and consolation of Jacques Synsmir, whose intentions are included in this Mass. We pray: **Calm our fears, O God.**
8. For long term commitments by individuals and institutions to erase Racism and White Supremacy in American society through an Era of Atonement and Conversion. We pray: **Calm our fears, O God.**
9. For all our loved ones in the military and their families, that they be returned to us safely. We pray: **Calm our fears, O God.**
10. For all those who are separated from us by infirmity, especially those listed in our bulletin, and for all those living with HIV and AIDS, that they know our community's care for them. We pray: **Calm our fears, O God.**
11. For all the dead, that they see God face to face, especially Cynthia Gairy, Raymond Burrows, Percy Walker and Elaine Cole for whom this Mass is being celebrated. We pray: **Calm our fears, O God.**
[THEN SKIP TO #10].
12. Please share any intention you have [PAUSE.....] as well as all our own needs. We pray: **Calm our fears, O God.**

Presider: God, our strength, we thank you for sending your son to show us how to live boldly for others. May we remember that you are with us always,

And may God bless you with the foolishness to think that you can make a difference in the world, so you will do things, which others say cannot be done.

We ask all this through Christ our Lord.
Let the church say, Amen.

Closing Prayer

O God, whose Son, our Messiah and Lord,
did not turn aside from the path of suffering
nor spare his disciples the prospect of rejection,
pour out your Spirit upon us,
that we may abandon the security of the easy way
and follow in Christ's footsteps toward the cross and true life.
Grant this through our Lord Jesus Christ, your Son, who lives and
reigns with you in the unity of the Holy Spirit, God for ever and ever.
Let the Church say.....AMEN!

Closing Hymn

I Want to be a Follower of Christ
by J.W. Harris

1. I want to be a follower of Christ,
I want to be one of his disciples.
I want to live in the newness of life,
Just let me be a follower of Christ.
2. I want to be a fisher, now for Christ.
I want to bring other souls to him,
I want to help rid this world of its strife,
Just let me be a follower of Christ.

What do I have to do?
What do I have to say?
How do I have to walk each and ev'ry day?
Tell me what does it cost if I carry the cross?
Just let me be a follower of Christ.