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12th Sunday in Ordinary Time - 25 June 2023

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25 June 2023

Twelfth Sunday in Ordinary Time

Reflection by Gerard Moore

Introduction

Last week we heard of the sending of the twelve and the mission to heal and salve. This week's readings are a further reflection on discipleship, opening up the difficulties of acting and speaking up for the reign of God, and the hardships, as the prophet Jeremiah laments, when we rescue the poor from the power of the wicked.

Penitential Act

Use one of the *Roman Missal* texts or this optional litany form:

Lord Jesus, you saved us from fear. Lord have mercy.

You delivered us from evil. Christ have mercy.

You remain with us until the end of time. Lord have mercy.

Collect

Oration

Grant, O Lord,

that we may always revere and love your holy name,

for you never deprive of your guidance

those you set firm on the foundation of your love.

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.

This ancient prayer, from the prayer life of parishes in seventh century Rome, reminds that the Christian people exist in and through the steadfast firmness of God's love. We are established in the core of God's existence.

The prayer focuses particularly on the active fidelity of God's love which sustains the relationship of the faithful. God continues to govern the people, established in divine love and never abandoned. God's governance is founded in this love, while the sacred mandates of divine law are all ordained towards love. The earliest known liturgical context of the prayer sets it between the feasts of the Ascension and Pentecost, allowing the prayer to point to the guiding presence of the Holy Spirit in the church.

The church is characterised by both fear and love of God. The pious devotion and observance of the community is based in its love for God. Through the gift of fear the faithful humbly acknowledge God's steadfast love, mercy and deliverance, and respond with devout service. This response is the heart of our worship, the source and inspiration of our wisdom, and the impulse that directs us to build the reign of God.

Collect commentary by Gerard Moore: The discussion of the collect, slightly adapted, was composed by me for the Canadian liturgical journal Celebrate! (Novalis Press). My thanks to them for permission to reuse the material.

First Reading

Jeremiah 20:10-13

God has rescued the life of the poor from the power of the wicked.

Responsorial Psalm

Ps 68:8-10, 14, 17, 33-35. R. v. 14

Lord, in your great love, answer me.

The response to the psalm captures the theme of the readings expressing clearly that the Lord will answer our needs.

Second Reading

Romans 5:12-15

In Christ, grace overcomes evil and we all benefit from this gracious gift.

Gospel Reading

Matthew 10:26-33

The incoming divine reign of grace and peace is not always welcomed, and on occasions promotes hostility and violence towards the disciples.

Reflection

Perhaps the missionary journey of healing and reconciliation has not gone quite so well! Last Sunday the twelve, the new Israel, went forth to heal, forgive, and bring in the outcast. The reading this Sunday is filled with concerns about the difficulty of the apostolic way. It is part of a series of paragraphs that acknowledge that the incoming of grace and peace is not always welcomed, and on occasions promotes hostility and violence. There is a sense, from our perspective, that this is to be expected, given that Jesus' own ministry led directly to his being tried, sentenced and killed. On the ground it feels somewhat different for the early church, and so too for us.

'Fear no one' is such an important admonition in the Catholic Church. We live in community within structures, yet the lack of integrity of structures often stifles or punishes the act of speaking. This occurs within parish and diocesan bodies, and more widely in charities and non-government organisations. Speaking truth to power leaves us vulnerable. Jesus calls us to go beyond our fears. As much as this may be directed to us as individuals, he is addressing the apostles. In fact, Jesus is calling all disciples to go beyond fear of speaking.

It is interesting that the emphasis falls to speaking and speaking out. Last Sunday the Gospel imperative was not around words or preaching or rebuttal or argument. It was around healing, attention to mental illness, welcoming the ritually impure, in effect bringing the 'dead' back to 'life' and communal belonging. Our reading today, carrying through from last week, joins fear to speak with fear to act.

With this there is a play on how God is present. The darkness, the secret, the whispered are available to God, who invites the disciples to bring to these situations light, openness and bold proclamation. Those who are cast aside as if in darkness, unmentioned and hidden, are not denied the attention of divine compassion. Not even the sparrows are. We are the bringers of that light, that voice and that love.

The final remarks are confronting, but consistent with Matthew's approach. If we are in Christ, we are to act and to speak up. If we do not, we act as if we are deniers. It is worth reading this passage in light of the final preaching of Jesus before his Passion. In the parable of the sheep and the goats, Christ is met in those in need (Mt 25:31-46). On the flip side, our actions and words are acknowledgements of our faith and encounters in faith. To fail to speak or act is to walk away from the divine encounter.

The community on mission, the disciple filled church, is to act and speak without fear, and encounter Christ as it works through the implications of action and speech.

Jeremiah is almost the perfect complement to the Gospel. The prophet can be so hard to read sometimes, given his situation always appears to be hopeless and much of what he says leaves him unsafe. Yet his words ring on through the ages to our ears. He is beset by slander, treacherous acquaintances he once knew as friends, and people out to trap him. His response is twofold. He holds that God will be his champion and bring his enemies to ruin. There is a streak of righteous revenge in the prophet which does not sit so well today. He is, however, writing in something of a lament genre where speaking through feelings is a movement towards a more healing attitude. With this he is both protesting and enduring that his pain and poor circumstances are also a probe of his mind and heart by God. He refers to the divine one as the Lord of Hosts, a military term indicating that God has multiple armed forces at hand, powerful and invincible. Typical of lament genre, the passage turns to praise and glory. This is not a generic response. God is praised and glorified for rescuing the lives of the poor from the hands of the wicked. It is a situation that Jeremiah knows well, as he is attacked by powerful forces of society.

There is some resonance with these themes in our passage from Paul to the Romans. In Christ grace overcomes evil, and we all benefit from this gracious gift. That is why we do not fear to speak and to act.

Prayer of the Faithful

Introduction

The psalmist calls on God to answer their prayers in great love. With the same confidence we present our needs.

Petitions

We pray for the leaders of our Church, especially Pope Francis, as we move towards the Synod on Synodality. May we hear Jesus' call to not be afraid to speak the truth.
(Pause) Lord hear us OR We pray to the Lord.

We pray for the leaders of all nations that they will not be afraid to stand up to injustice and tyranny. May the truth be heard in all board rooms and political gatherings.
(Pause) Lord hear us OR We pray to the Lord.

We pray for all those who work in the health sector. May their efforts be effective as the pandemic continues and winter illnesses abound.
(Pause) Lord hear us OR We pray to the Lord.

We pray for those in education. May they fearlessly promote the truth and listen to real wisdom as they form their students in a desire for justice and peace.
(Pause) Lord hear us OR We pray to the Lord.

We pray for all those who are suffering. May their pain be alleviated by the selfless care of those who attend to their needs.
(Pause) Lord hear us OR We pray to the Lord.

We pray for our community gathered here in prayer. May our experience today of the Eucharist send us out ever more willing to be missionaries in our world.
(Pause) Lord hear us OR We pray to the Lord.

Conclusion

God of compassion, we lift our prayer to you in the hope that it will be granted in the name of Jesus, our Lord, and through the power of the Holy Spirit.

Amen.

Music selections by Alessio Loiacono and Chris deSilva

Title	AOV1	AOV2	AOVK	CWB	CWBII	GA
Amazing grace	29				450	437
Be not afraid	114				652	449
Be thou my vision	9			733	455	
Be with me Lord				627	286	53
Christ is made the sure foundation				640		482
Do not be afraid/ The Lord is my light		73		593/594	481	28
Eye has not seen	146					466
For the beauty of the earth	123			678	487	427
Gift of finest wheat				685	651	191
Glory and praise to our God	16				491	417
God is our shelter			12			
Good Shepherd, you know us					357	
How can I keep from singing?						454
I heard the voice of Jesus say	54				512	468
In faith and hope and love				722	520	442
Joyful, joyful we adore You					528	
Lord of all hopefulness				738	541	
Lord of all nations					542	
No greater love					622	460
Now let us from this table rise				753	560	
Now thank we all our God	189			755	561	425
O Christ the great foundation					565	483
O God, beyond all praising					566	
O God, our help in ages past	175			767	568	459
O Lord, at your first Eucharist				773	578	
On eagle's wings					654	
Praise, my soul, the King of Heaven	78			789	588	
Praise to the holiest in the height				791	585	410
Praise to the Lord		132		792	586	
Sing praise to our Creator				809	393	
The cry of the poor	83				618	36
The summons					645	502
This day God gives me				840	625	536
You walk along our shoreline					653	

Title	AOVNG	S&S1	S&S2
Be not afraid		170	
On eagle's wings		195	
The summons		137	
We will follow Will you come and follow me/The summons	149		358

Psalms Selected by Chris deSilva and Angela McCarthy

Psalm 68: *Lord, in your great love, answer me.*

	CWB	JOBA	LPA
Psalm 68	382	p. 71	p. 109

