

Twelfth Sunday of the Year A

Matthew 10:26-33

26 Jesus instructed the Twelve as follows: 'Do not be afraid. For everything that is now covered will be uncovered, and everything now hidden will be made clear. 27 What I say to you in the dark, tell in the daylight; what you hear in whispers, proclaim from the house-tops.

28 'Do not be afraid of those who kill the body but cannot kill the soul; fear him rather who can destroy both body and soul in hell. 29 Can you not buy two sparrows for a penny? And yet not one falls to the ground without your Father knowing. 30 Why, every hair on your head has been counted. 31 So there is no need to be afraid; you are worth more than hundreds of sparrows.

32 'So if anyone declares himself for me in the presence of men, I will declare myself for him in the presence of my Father in heaven. 33 But the one who disowns me in the presence of men, I will disown in the presence of my Father in heaven.'

Other readings: Jeremiah 20:10-13 Psalm 68 (69) Romans 5:12-15

We continue reading the Missionary Discourse of Jesus in the Gospel of Matthew. Jesus encourages the apostles to speak out and foresees the persecution of the missionaries. He urges the disciples to remember the providential love of God. In words reminiscent of the Sermon on the Mount, he points to the Father's care even for the well-being of sparrows.

At the same time he recognises that great courage is necessary to preach the gospel. It is not easy to shout the truth from the house-tops. It is not easy to declare oneself for Christ in the presence of those who ridicule and mock religion. The gospel reading invites us to ponder on the thousands of Christians who have spoken up for their faith at the risk of losing their lives, not only in distant centuries but also in our own day.

The first reading considers the words of Jeremiah who was persecuted for preaching the truth of God. He speaks of his distress, but also of his trust in the Lord who will protect him. The prophetic mission of Jeremiah and his fidelity amid suffering help us to understand the mission and suffering of Christ.

Our passage from the Letter to the Romans is of great significance. St Paul explains that while our first parents opened the gates for sin to enter into the world, the actions of Jesus Christ brought the free gift of life and salvation.

Do I have the courage to speak up for Christ when others mock my religion?

Do I trust in the providential care of the Father?

We pray for all those who speak up for the Christian message at the risk of their lives.

We pray for faith and courage amid all the difficulties of life.