

Homily for the 12th Sunday in Ordinary Time, A, June 21, 2020

Today is Father's Day, so a very happy Father's Day to all the fathers of the parish. This day is a reminder of how important fathers are in the lives of their children. Fathers teach love, sacrifice, generosity and a giving spirit to their children and they are an image of God to them as well. Remember Jesus told us to call God, "ABBA" which really means "Dad". So happy Father's Day to you!

When we left Matthew's Gospel last February we had just finished reading the Sermon on the Mount. Now we pick-up reading three chapters later from Ch.10: 26-33. Earlier in this chapter Jesus had selected the 12 Apostles and given them his mission to preach the Good News and to heal in his name. He told them that he is sending them out like sheep among wolves. Today he tells them whom to fear – actually they are to **fear nobody**.

During this time of anxiety due to the coronavirus this is good advice for us, too. **Fear nobody**. Like Jeremiah in the first reading today and the Apostles in the Gospel we are often filled with fears and anxieties. Sometimes it is the fear of losing prestige, security, comfort or well-being or the fear of losing social position, or money or our happiness. This keeps us from making good decisions. We also fear failure and the possibility of ending up alone, without friends or people's love. And we also do not like criticism, gossip and rejection by others. And finally, we sometimes just fear the future. With all these anxieties and fears there is always the temptation to seek that safe harbor in religion. But we also know that this is wrong -- to use religion as a cop-out on facing the challenges of life. Trusting in God, when rightly understood, helps us to overcome our reticence and fills our hearts and minds with the power to live more generously and bravely. When we truly take

Jesus's words to heart, we can confidently face the challenges of life and **fear nobody**.

Like Jeremiah and the apostles we are called to be prophets. The Second Vatican Council taught us that we are the People of God and that every Christian is called by baptism to be a prophet, a true witness to Christ by living a life of faith and love.

St. Paul today talks about baptism. Our baptism automatically joins us to a family or a community to worship and prayer. Why? Because there is no such thing as a solitary Christian. The final anointing of our baptism commissions us: "*to be priests, prophets, and king.*" Priests to join in the sacrifice of Christ, the High Priest; prophets to witness Christ in the world and Kings (queens) because we are part of God's royal family, brothers and sisters of the Lord.

To be a prophet or a witness is no easy task. We face the challenge of living in a secular society which pushes the idea that there is no need for the love of God nor is there any need for the Church. Jesus warns us that being a Christian may cause suffering and sacrifice but there is the satisfaction in standing up to the truths of our values and being *prophetic* people by the way we live our Christian lives.

We hear today "**fear nobody**." Jesus is not telling us to be fearless but to control all our fears because He is with us.

So welcome back to Ordinary Time in the church year.