

Twelfth Sunday in Ordinary Time - Lectionary: 94

Reading 1 - [Jeremiah 20:10-13](#)

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.' 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. 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. Sing to the LORD, praise the LORD, for he has rescued the life of the poor from the power of the wicked!"

Responsorial Psalm - [Psalm 69:8-10, 14, 17, 33-35](#) R. (14c) Lord, in your great love, answer me.

Reading 2 - [Romans 5:12-15](#)

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—for up to the time of the law, sin was in the world, though sin is not accounted when there is no law. 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.

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.

Gospel - [Matthew 10:26-33](#)

Jesus said to the Twelve: "Fear no one. Nothing is concealed that will not be revealed, nor secret that will not be known. What I say to you in the darkness, speak in the light; what you hear whispered, proclaim on the housetops. 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. Are not two sparrows sold for a small coin? Yet not one of them falls to the ground without your Father's knowledge. Even all the hairs of your head are counted. So do not be afraid; you are worth more than many sparrows. Everyone who acknowledges me before others I will acknowledge before my heavenly Father. But whoever denies me before others, I will deny before my heavenly Father."

Divine Courage and the Call to Witness: A Mandate to Stand Unafraid

Summary: The readings and reflections for the 12th Sunday in Ordinary Time present a "come to Jesus" moment regarding the Christian responsibility to bear witness to the truth. The central mandate is a call to acknowledge Christ publicly, predicated on the promise that those who do so will be acknowledged by Him before the Father. Conversely, the consequences of denial are grave: a reciprocal denial by Christ in the heavenly court. The homily outlines a sharp dichotomy between the "prudence of the flesh"—which seeks to preserve the body or social standing at any cost—and authentic Christian prudence, which prioritizes the soul and the pursuit of truth. Despite the inevitability of persecution, rejection, and "little deaths" in daily life, the faithful are exhorted to abandon fear. Ultimately, the call to be a "sign of contradiction" in a "culture of death" requires moving belief in God's providence from an abstract intellectual concept to a concrete, heart-centered reality sustained by prayer. **Divine Providence:** Nothing escapes God's all-loving power. This should be a source of comfort, yet anxiety persists because this belief remains abstract. **The Necessity of Prayer:** Prayer is not an elective; it must be as vital as eating and sleeping. It is the primary vehicle for developing a personal relationship with God. **The Gift of Courage:** Through the Sacrament of Confirmation, the Holy Spirit provides the gift of courage. This gift does not eliminate fear but provides the strength to "get you over the fear to act as you ought."

Fear No One: The Courage to Witness for Christ

Problem
The Paralyzing Power of Fear

The Danger of "Little Deaths"
Social Awkwardness Job Loss Rejection
We often fear social awkwardness, job loss, or rejection more than losing our souls.

False Prudence vs. Cunning
"Prudence of the flesh" prioritizes saving one's skin over acting with integrity.

"Fear No One"
Christ commands us to proclaim in the light what is whispered in the dark.

The Solution: Standing Up to be Counted

You Are Worth More Than Many Sparrows
God's providence is so intimate that every hair on your head is counted.

Acknowledging Christ
Christ acknowledges you in Heaven

Denying Christ/Silence
Christ denies you in Heaven / Loss of faith voice

The Three Stages of Prudence

1. Counsel with God
2. Judge the right path
3. Act with decisive execution

The Strength of the Holy Spirit
The gift of courage in Confirmation helps us overcome fear to act rightly.

NotebookLM

Major themes running through the readings this Sunday, are rejection and persecution by those who do not want to hear the Truth of God. However, as the Gospel also reminds us, that we have a responsibility to stand up and be counted regardless of the possible risk: *Everyone, therefore, who acknowledges me before others, I also will acknowledge before my Father in heaven, but whoever denies me before others, I also will deny before my Father in heaven.* Thank God, there are still many of us doing so even as it's not always easy; because they know God never abandons us, is with us always, giving each of us the strength to speak truth in charity and to act in defense of the dignity and value of the human person.

The readings today affirm that we are to be prophets for Christ in a world desperate for the Truth. That we listen to, understand, and follow the words of Jesus and throughout scripture, to fear not, to have no fear of any person. Doing so through leaning into the gift of courage from the Holy Spirit, through the sacrament of Confirmation, to speak as Christians by boldly proclaiming the Gospel in love. We are strengthened to not fear death, or in our circumstances the many possible 'little deaths', for Christ, by being faithful disciples in every way.

The readings today are also concerned with what happens when living the gospel is seriously undertaken. That a disciple of Christ, in the fullest sense, spreads the saving message in word and action; even while knowing it will be seen by some as a threat to be resisted, rejected, ridiculed. Regardless of this, a fully committed Christian loves others with the same love that Christ showed for us. Will we be loved in return, not always. Will others be full of gratitude, not always. So, what. Those aren't the reasons we do the right thing. That's not why we choose to stand and be counted. We are not Christians so as to be loved and looked up to, but to proclaim by word and example the vision of a fully human life that Jesus preached and made possible.

This will quite often mean calling into question the less than human standards that prevail in our societies. In doing this, the Christian is a ‘sign of contradiction’ to people whose vision of life is very different from the gospel message that we try to live out. We should be reminded in this moment of the dichotomy drawn by Pope Saint John Paul II between a culture of life and a culture of death. As we strive to build a culture of life, presenting our case in the most loving and non-violent and non-manipulative way, can be seen by those who are intent on building a culture of death, as a negative judgement by some and invite retaliations of hate, bitterness, violence—and sometimes death.

The greatest danger is not the loss of our lives. As Jesus says: *Do not fear those who kill the body but cannot kill the soul; rather, fear the one who can destroy both soul and body in hell.*¹ If we are to have any fear at all, it ought to be a fear of being seduced into betraying those values on which our integrity as human persons depends. To save our ‘bodies’ at the expense of truth, love, justice, and freedom or at the expense of human solidarity—this is the real danger. That is the real death that matters.

In today’s Gospel our Lord reminds the Apostles that they only must stand with him and not be afraid. If we stand with Christ neither bodily death nor sacrifices should frighten us, because we are not alone and, like him, eternal life awaits us. The only fear we should have is spiritual death: a life separated from him and separated from the Father, which makes life a living death from here to eternity. Trust in our Lord should embolden us, more than evil and disbelief in the world should intimidate us. We all have moments where we question whether the Lord really knows what is going on or truly cares about what will happen to us. His Son is the response to those doubts. He came to show us how precious we are in his eyes and the eyes of Our Heavenly Father. He’s also our lifeline.

St. Paul reminds us today that the grace we need comes through him, and that grace not only sustains us in communion with him but with the Father as well. We stand with the Father by standing with Christ, just as we fall if we don’t. It is not enough simply to attend Mass once a week and go to Confession once a year. Our lives—individually and together—need to visibly give witness to justice, equal dignity of all, honesty, a spirit of service, sharing resources and defending the weak and marginalized. To be a living witness to Christ may generate some hostility among people we know. It is better to be right with Christ than wrong with the crowd. To be a living witness, one needs confidence in Christ and in oneself, and a conviction that the only way that benefits all is the Way of Jesus.

Once you lower your voice regarding your faith, you’ll soon find that as you lose your outdoor voice, you’ll lose your indoor voice too: it doesn’t just stop in the public square, or your doorstep. Soon you don’t even talk about the faith with your family and friends. Take stock of the reasons this week for which you don’t share your faith as much as you ought and ask the Holy Spirit to help you see whether false prudence is at the root of it. If we find that we are not known to be Christian, or that being a Christian seems to be no different from anyone else, if we find that our Christian communities and our parishes leave no mark on their surrounding society, then we need to ask ourselves seriously what kind of Christian lives we are leading and what kind of witness to the gospel we are giving.

In today’s Second Reading Paul reminds us that even though sin had a head start and plenty of time to spread it was nothing compared to the grace that would flow from one man standing up to it: Our Lord. Because of Adam, the “one man” mentioned at the start of today’s Second Reading, sin and death entered the world and spread to everyone throughout human history. The dire effects of that Original Sin still rage unchecked in many ways, and no one has a problem seeing the evils that plague the world and the Church. Adam could have never made amends for the evil and death he’d caused. Yet, God did not leave him, or

¹ Matthew 10:28

us, to our fate. He sent his Son, who wiped away the sins of the world in Baptism and brought the grace of God to us again.

God's providence is real. As the Catechism tells us in its very first paragraph, *"For this reason, at every time and in every place, God draws close to man. He calls man to seek him, to know him, to love him with all his strength. He calls together all men, scattered and divided by sin, into the unity of his family, the Church."* Nothing escapes God's all-loving, all-powerful providence. This should be a source of comfort for us. So why isn't it? Why do we find ourselves full of anxiety, frustration, and sadness in the face of life's difficulties and challenges? For one simple reason: the truth of God's providence hasn't made its way from our head to our heart. We believe in God's providence in the abstract, but we don't apply that belief to the concrete reality of our daily lives.

Pope Benedict XVI told the 20,000 young people that were gathered with him in New York, *"What matters most is that you develop your personal relationship with God. That relationship is expressed in prayer."* We must pray more and pray better - all of us, to bring this truth from the head to the heart. Prayer must become as important for us as eating and sleeping. This is no exaggeration. All the saints say the same thing. And as he reminded the bishops of the United States during that same visit: *"It is easy to be entranced by the almost unlimited possibilities that science and technology place before us; it is easy to make the mistake of thinking we can obtain by our own efforts the fulfillment of our deepest needs. This is an illusion. Without God, who alone bestows upon us what we by ourselves cannot attain, our lives are ultimately empty. People need to be constantly reminded to cultivate a relationship with him who came that we might have life in abundance."*

Prudence helps us decide the good thing to do and the right way to do it in each situation. We can also fall into false prudence, into a prudence of the flesh, which is what Our Lord describes in the Gospel today as only being afraid of the destruction of our bodies while forgetting that saving our skins is pointless if we lose our souls in the process. Another form of false prudence is when we focus on achieving a good by any means necessary, even evil means. We convince ourselves that we're doing the wrong thing for the right reasons. The *Catechism* teaches us that authentic prudence is the cardinal virtue that *"disposes the practical reason to discern, in every circumstance, our true good and to choose the right means for achieving it."* It guides our practical decision making in individual, concrete circumstances and provides for effective execution once a decision is reached. With the help of prudence, we learn from our experiences and correctly apply moral principles to real-life situations.²

The three stages of prudence acting properly are deliberation, judgment, and decision. Note that hesitation is appropriate when it comes to deliberation: One can and should consider all the facts and moral principles that bear on the situation and be open to human and divine counsel. However, a considered decision should be performed swiftly. For example, if a person in authority asks us to do something that may be inappropriate, we should consider whether it would be prudent to obey. However, as soon as we discern that such a request constitutes a legitimate exercise of authority, our decision to obey should be promptly acted upon.

Errors in judgment can creep in through defects of prudence or through "false prudence." Defects include thoughtlessness, rashness, negligence, indecisiveness, and inconstancy in execution. False prudence takes two forms. One is the giving in to the "prudence of the flesh," thus making decisions based solely on serving the goods of the body, which St. Paul criticizes as being displeasing to God and leading to death (cf. Rom. 8:6-8). The other form is what St. Thomas calls *astutia*, which is often translated as "cunning" or

² Catechism of the Catholic Church, 1806, 1835

“craftiness.” Astutia is concerned more with “tactics” than living in the light. True prudence isn’t only concerned with a good end, but also good means to that end.

In the Book of Tobit, we are advised: *“Seek advice from every wise man, and do not despise any useful counsel. Bless the Lord God on every occasion; ask him that your ways may be made straight and that all your paths and plans may prosper.”*³ This passage encourages us to learn and take counsel from others in true humility and docility. It also encourages us to seek the Lord’s assistance. Through the gift of counsel, one of the gifts of the Holy Spirit, prudence is purified and directed toward our ultimate good, God Himself.

Glossary of Key Terms

Term	Definition
Astutia	Often translated as "cunning" or "craftiness"; a form of false prudence concerned with tactics rather than living in the light.
Cardinal Virtues	Principal moral virtues, including prudence, temperance, fortitude (courage), and justice, that manifest in a believer's life.
Culture of Life	A vision of society, championed by St. John Paul II, that values the dignity of the human person and acts in a loving, non-violent manner.
Domestic Church	The family unit, where parents (particularly fathers in the context of the homily) lead children in prayer and the development of virtue.
False Prudence	A defect of reason where one makes decisions based solely on physical safety or uses immoral means to achieve a desired end.
Gehenna	A biblical reference to a place of final destruction; used to describe the fate of both body and soul for those who deny God.
Grace	The free and undeserved gift of God, flowing through Jesus Christ, that sustains communion with the Father and overcomes the effects of sin.
Providence	The protective care and guardianship of God; the reality that nothing, not even a sparrow's fall, escapes God’s all-loving and all-powerful knowledge.
Prudence	The cardinal virtue that disposes practical reason to discern the true good in every circumstance and choose the right means to achieve it.
Sign of Contradiction	A person or message that challenges prevailing worldly standards and is consequently resisted, rejected, or ridiculed.
Theological Virtues	The virtues of Faith, Hope, and Love (Charity) that are meant to be manifested for all to see.

³ Tobit 4:18-19