

SPIRITUAL LIFE

Twelfth Sunday in Ordinary Time Adapted from 'Catholic Exponent'

Not too long ago a young father from our parish was out of work. His company had failed. He prayed hard to find a new job and related to me that his prayers were answered. He acquired a new job as an accountant with a good company.

Just yesterday he told me that he was with his new firm but a few short weeks when his boss asked him to 'cook the books.' When he refused, he was immediately dismissed. Once again he is looking for a job. In my opinion this man has integrated the message of today's Gospel into his daily life. Let me explain.

In Matthew's Gospel Jesus' public ministry is marked by five major discourses, each preceded by an account of various activities of the Lord. The purpose of these discourses is to enunciate some aspect of the Kingdom of God, which was central to Jesus' message.

The reading for today is part of the second discourse (9:35-11:1). It recalls for us how we are to conduct ourselves in the period between the time when the Kingdom first arrived in the person and the message of Jesus and the final inward breaking of the Kingdom at the time of the Lord's second coming. We live in the 'in between'.

Three times Jesus tells the apostles and you and me: 'Fear not. Do not let yourselves be intimidated.' He is not speaking about fear in general. Jesus is speaking about that particular kind of fear a Christian feels when called upon to say something or do something that shows he or she is a follower of Christ.

How often we hesitate to speak the Christ-like word, to do the Christ-like thing, because we are afraid of the smirks and sneers of others, afraid of being called a 'wimp' or singled out for being different.

Jesus did not say there would be no reason to fear. He knew some people would make life difficult for his followers. He realized there would be danger of losing friends, a job, a promotion, that many of his followers would be put to death rather than deny their faith in him.

The challenge for us is to identify the times and the ways we are afraid to demonstrate to others that we are followers of Christ. Maybe we are afraid to change the subject when someone brings up a juicy piece of gossip or tears down the reputation of another person. Maybe we are afraid to say 'No' to drugs or to refuse the drink that would be too much for us.

When the Church is unjustly attacked, when the priest is harmfully criticized, when the teachings of Jesus are publicly ridiculed—in the classroom, at the drug store, in the office or on the local talk show, do we remember not to fear, but to speak out for the truth and speak up for the faith? If the Gospel today is to have meaning for us, each of us needs to stop...and recall the times when Jesus' words apply to our situation. 'Do not let others intimidate you. Fear not.'

Look at this positively. Christ promises us today: 'Everyone who acknowledges me before others, I also will acknowledge before my Father in heaven.'

Your presence at Sunday Mass is one proof that you are not afraid to witness to your faith in the Lord Jesus. Let us pray that we may never be ashamed to witness Christ and profess our faith daily in the world.

Adapted from 'Catholic Exponent'

READINGS OF THE WEEK

Jeremiah 20:10-13

Romans 5:12-15

Matthew 10:26-33

June 25, 2017

內容： 耶 20:7-18 是耶肋米亞先知書五篇「耶肋米亞的自白」中最後和最動人的一篇。本段讀經是這段自白中的四節，是耶肋米亞先知以第一身申述自己的困苦和依賴。先知預言耶路撒冷將被毀滅引起了群眾的恐慌，他被指責打擊士氣，妖言惑眾。人人都密謀控訴他，甚至好友也監視他一言一行，一舉一動，設局陷害，試圖制勝他（20:10）。耶肋米亞深覺上主與他同在，確信祂會照顧和保護。先知邀請眾人歌頌和讚揚上主，因為上主從惡人手中救出了窮苦的人（20:13）。

上下文： 上文 20:1-6 記述耶肋米亞先知與帕市胡爾司祭的衝突，司祭把先知囚在聖殿內的監牢裡，可能編者有意以此作為引發先知下一段激烈自白（20:7-18）的誘發事件。下文 21:1-10 漆德克雅王派人去問先知與巴比倫作戰的勝算如何？先知預言猶大將大敗、王被擄、人民被充軍、聖城被焚毀。

釋義： 耶肋米亞先知書共五十二章，內容大略分為四部份：（一）有關猶大和耶路撒冷的神諭（1-25）；（二）有關以色列復興的神諭（26-35）；（三）耶肋米亞的受難（36-45）及（四）有關各民族的神諭（46-51）。52 章是歷史附錄。本文屬於第一部份，這部份的內容是上主召選了耶肋米亞為先知，先知代上主發言，說出猶大和耶路撒冷的現況及未來。

- * 五篇的「耶肋米亞的自白」（11:18-23）；15:10-21；17:17-12；18:18-23 及 20:7-18 中尤以 20:10-13 反映了耶肋米亞面對著人性和先知的使命的內心鬥爭，充滿矛盾和掙扎。先知被人謀害，暗中設計向他報復，眾叛親離，受到多方面的攻擊，但仍堅持將自己交託在上主手中，決不離開上主，並歌頌和讚揚祂（20:13）。他的禱聲由咆哮、復仇到全心皈依和誠心讚美，是何等的奇妙，跨越了人生一大步。
- * 綜觀耶肋米亞的一生都是充滿了困苦，但卻仍懷信賴和希望。上主召選他時，最先他是不願意的，最後接受了（1:4-10），因為上主對他說：「不要害怕，因為我與你同在，保護你。」（1:8）
- * 先知亦深知自己受了上主的制伏，上主比他強，戰勝了他。他代上主發言，招致侮辱和譏笑，苦不堪言，但若他強行抑制，不想念上主，不以祂的言發言，在他心中像有火在燃燒，無法抵抗，這心火使他欲罷不能（20:7-9）。他雖曾詛咒自己的出生，意識到自己的一生就是不幸，倒不如不出生更好（20:14-18）。這種絕望的心情乃是耶肋米亞的心路歷程，是人的一種自然反應，但經此一役，向主申訴，更能體驗上主與他同在，更依賴祂。
- * 「**警慌四起**」（10）這本來是耶肋米亞先知對帕市胡爾司祭說的話（20:3），描述敵人入侵時的恐怖情況，現在反過來是人們嘲笑和譏笑先知和指責他妖言惑眾的話他四面受敵的事實，證明他對天主的埋怨不是沒有道理的。這也反映了耶肋米亞先知當時正處於巖峻的心理和靈修上的危機。
- * 「**祂好像是一位孔武有力的戰士**」（11）先知的信心是基於先知常掛在口邊的上主的許諾（1:18-19）。在這種強烈的自我、與他人的鬥爭之中，他最大的支柱就是他對於上主既許必踐的信心。
- * 「**窮苦的人**」（13）希伯來文的「窮人」或「窮困者」不只是指人經濟上的困境，而含有濃厚的宗教意義，是指對上主虔敬、敬畏上主的人（參閱詠 109<108>30-31；140<139>:13-14）。

信 息： 我們縱然遇到艱辛和苦，亦不要害怕，應勇敢接受上主派遣的使命，努力宣揚福音。就如今日的福音說：「你們不要害怕，你們比許多麻雀還貴重呢！凡在人前承認我的，在我天主的父前也必承認他。」

摘自「荒漠燃燒」