

Twelfth Sunday in Ordinary Time

FutureChurch Online Liturgy of the Word

Introductory Rites

Sign of the Cross

Leader: In the name of our God, who loves us into being,
Of Christ Jesus, who speaks us into freedom,
and the Spirit, who moves us into holiness,
(making the sign of the cross)

ALL: AMEN

Greeting

Leader: The healing peace of Jesus,
the abundant Love of God, and the companionship of the Holy Spirit
IS with you,

ALL: And also with you.

Introductory Remarks *Prepared by Katie Lacz*

Possibly like many of you, being home during this pandemic time means that my family and I have been paying closer attention to the natural habitat of our backyards and front yards, if you have them. My five-and-a-half-year-old son is newly interested in birds, and gets so excited every time he sees one at our birdfeeder – house finches and chickadees, mostly, and a single bluebird who comes every day. He notices when they are gone, and lets us know immediately when they're returned.

*I think of that excitement and love when I hear the tenderness in today's Gospel:
Are not two sparrows sold for a small coin? Yet not one of them falls to the ground without God's knowledge.*

My son shows me a glimpse of God's caring eye for all creation. And reminds me, as the Gospel does, that God notices, knows, and deeply loves each creature, including us. Including, and especially, those who have been told repeatedly by society that they are worthless.

We're in a time of reckoning in a new way with the real and sustained damage that has accrued over centuries to our black and brown siblings, who have been told implicitly and explicitly that their lives are simply worth less. And the Gospel reminds us that God sees the people that have been told the lie that their lives are worth less than a counterfeit \$20 bill, or a parked car in a drive-thru lane, or a pack of cigarettes. And God loves them more than many sparrows, counts all the hairs on their heads. And we are to do the same.

We – especially if you are white like me --have been taught as a society to fear the wrong thing. We have been taught to fear people with a different skin color, instead of fearing the systems that distort our souls by thinking that having white skin makes one better than having black or brown skin.

So I invite us to hear Jesus speaking the words of today's Gospel directly to us – do not be afraid. Act with courage, acknowledging Christ before others by acknowledging the image of him in people who have too long been tossed aside. May we listen attentively and take courage, which at its linguistic roots means to take heart.

Opening Prayer

Leader: Let us pray.

True and faithful God,
You give courage to the fearful
and endurance to the martyrs.

Sustain us as followers of Christ Jesus,
That with boldness, courage, and conviction
We may live and proclaim thee Gospel before the world.

We make this prayer in the name of Jesus,
Who lives and thrives with you, with us all,
in the unity of the Holy Spirit, God for ever and ever.

ALL: AMEN

LITURGY OF THE WORD

****Texts have been adapted for inclusive/expansive language****

First Reading

Lector: A reading from the prophet Jeremiah,

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 God 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 God most Holy, 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 God,
praise God,
who has rescued the life of the poor
from the power of the wicked!"

All: The Word of God
Thanks be to God

Psalm

Psalmist: The response is:
"In your great love, O God, answer me."
R: "In your great love, O God, answer me."

For your sake I bear insult,
and shame covers my face.
I have become an outcast to my kindred,
a stranger to my children,
Because zeal for your house consumes me,
and the insults of those who blaspheme you fall upon me.
R: "In your great love, O God, answer me."

I pray to you, O God,
For the time of your favor!
In your great kindness answer me
With your constant help.
Answer me, O God, for bounteous is your kindness;
In your great mercy turn toward me
R: "In your great love, O God, answer me."

"See, you lowly ones, and be glad;
you who seek God, may your hearts revive!
For God hears the poor,
and comes to free those who are in bonds.
Let the heavens and the earth praise God,
the seas and whatever moves in them!"
R: "In your great love, O God, answer me."

Second Reading

Lector: A reading from the letter of Paul to the Romans,

Sisters and brothers:

Through one, sin entered the world,
and through sin, death,
and thus death came to all, 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 Jesus Christ
overflow for the many.

ALL: The word of God
Thanks be to God

Gospel Acclamation

Cantor: "Alleluia! Raise the Gospel" by B. Farrell

Gospel

A reading from the Gospel according to Matthew:

Jesus said:

"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 God'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 God.
But whoever denies me before others,
I will deny before my heavenly God."

The Good News of Our Salvation

ALL: Praise to you, O Christ.

FAITH SHARING

Reflection

– CWP Video: www.catholicwomenpreach.org/preaching/06212020

Questions for Shared Reflection:

*In her preaching, Joan Grey, helps us to confront our fears, offering "stop-drop-pray" as one option. **We live in frightening times. How do you find yourself responding to this fear? How might your relationship with God or with others help you face whatever fear you may be carrying? Who might be living in fear right now and how might you reach out to them to help them move through that fear?***

*In our Gospel, Jesus says, "Everyone who acknowledges me before others I will acknowledge before my heavenly God. But whoever denies me before others, I will deny before my heavenly God. **What words or actions are you being asked to say or take to acknowledge Christ in our current realities – even if it might be frightening or risky? How have/might you respond?***

CONCLUDING RITES

Closing Prayer

Leader: Nourished by God's word and strengthened by this community,
Let us pray together,

**ALL: Loving God, Holy One,
Your desire is for our wholeness and well-being.
We hold in tenderness and prayer the collective suffering of our world at this time.
We grieve precious lives lost and vulnerable lives threatened.
We ache for ourselves and our neighbors, standing before an uncertain future.**

We pray: may love, not fear, go viral. Inspire our leaders to discern and choose wisely, aligned with the common good.

Help us to practice physical distancing, revealing to us new and creative ways to hold each other fast, so we may care for each other in tender solidarity.

Call us to profound trust in your faithful presence,

You, the God who does not abandon,

You, the Holy One, breathing within us, breathing among us,

breathing around us, in our beautiful yet wounded world. AMEN

Adapted from "Prayer during a Pandemic" by Sr. Chris Koellhoffer, IHM

Blessing

Leader: And may the God of hope fill us with every comfort and joy in believing.
May the peace of Christ abound in our hearts and minds.
and may the Holy Spirit gift and guide us
(making Sign of the Cross) now and forever,

ALL: AMEN

Dismissal

Leader: Our time of prayer and reflection is ended and we go forth in courage to proclaim God's reign of justice and peace from the rooftops!

ALL: Thanks be to God!