

## Twelfth Sunday in Ordinary Time, Cycle A

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**Scriptures:** Jeremiah 20: 7-13; Psalm 69: 7-18; Romans 6: 1-11; Matthew 10: 24-39

“I hear the whisperings of many: ....’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.’”(Jer 20:10)

These words were written by the prophet Jeremiah in the early 6<sup>th</sup> century **BC**! Yet, they could have come out of contemporary political and social history. It’s nothing new for enemies to lie in wait to trap and snare their adversaries. “Dirty tricks” have been around for millennia, thought up and utilized by those who are willing to try anything to prevent something happening or someone succeeding that they oppose.

It is clear from our first reading today from Jeremiah that he hears the whisperings of his enemies, that he has every reason to be cautious, even fearful. That’s the bad news. The good news is what sustains him in his mission – his faith. “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.” (Jer 20:11) He is confident that he is an instrument of God’s plan, and that he can serve God faithfully because God has rescued the life of the poor from the power of the wicked!” (Jer 20:13)

It is that conviction, lived out down through the ages, that has inspired and empowered believers to arrive at what we today call Catholic Social Teaching, and to proclaim it with courage and conviction even in the face of adversity and opposition. As we have come to understand God’s plan over the centuries of experience, reflection and prayer, the foundation of a moral vision for society is the sacredness of every human life and the dignity of every human person. We believe that every person is precious, that people are more important than things, and that the measure of every institution is whether it threatens or enhances the life and dignity of the human person. (“Themes from Catholic Social Teaching”, USCCB)

Such a belief is challenged by abortion and euthanasia, by cloning, embryonic stem cell research, and the use of the death penalty, by bigotry, and prejudice, by ethnic, racial and religious aggression. We live in a global, national and sometimes local climate where physical, emotional and verbal violence are used almost routinely as problem-solvers, and where witnessing to our belief in the sacredness of every human life and the dignity of every human person can put the witness in opposition to social norms and customs, and in opposition to friends and family.

Again, this is nothing new. As Jesus sent the 12 out on mission to in our Gospel reading today, he encouraged them: “Fear no one....What I say to you in the darkness, speak in the light; what you hear whispered, proclaim on the housetops.” (Mt 10: 26-27) He had chosen everyday people in an oppressed and occupied land in a faraway corner of the Roman Empire to be living witnesses to his vision of humanity, and he reassured them to “not be afraid; you are worth more than many sparrows.” (Mt 10: 31)

Ours is the heritage of Jeremiah, who suffered for his faithfulness, yet never gave up. Ours is the heritage of the 12, who took heart in the reassurance that the God of all the universe cared attentively for every human life. Ours is the call to share in their witness.