

**June 21, 2020 | Twelfth Sunday in Ordinary Time (A)**

[Jer 20:10-13](#)

[Ps 69:8-10, 14, 17, 33-35](#)

[Rom 5:12-15](#)

[Matt 10:26-33](#)

*By Dianne Bergant*

There is great sadness in our world. Sadness and fear. An enemy has attacked us we cannot see or feel or smell or understand. Nor do we know why we have been attacked. Some maintain that we brought it on ourselves, with our thoughtless living and careless consumption. Some insist that we are innocent victims of the carelessness of others. Still others claim that we are being punished for our sin. What does our religious tradition say about this? Since it is not a book of science, it will not yield scientific explanations. Nor is it a book of political strategy with suggestions for social policy. It is a religious tradition that calls us to perceive life from a particular religious point of view and to act in a particular religious manner. Two very strong statements in today's readings serve us well in our reflection. The first is in the passage from Jeremiah: "[T]he Lord is with me, like a mighty champion." The second statement comes from the gospel reading: "[D]o not be afraid; you are worth more than any sparrows." These passages speak of God's tender care for us, and such care is found throughout our biblical tradition.

The leaders of Jeremiah's day persecuted him because he refused to preach a message of false hope. Rather than assert that the physical presence of the temple in Jerusalem would guarantee protection from the invading Babylonians, he insisted that the nation would be defeated. As a consequence of such harsh preaching, the prophet suffered at the hands of the very ones who should have listened to him. Even those who had been his friends turned out to be enemies. Despite such hardships, Jeremiah trusted in God's provident care of him. He insisted that "the Lord is with me."

Jesus instructed his close followers to be fearless when encountering opposition for what they believe, not in some foolhardy way but with a fearlessness grounded in trust in God. Such trust does not presume that there will be no sadness, no fear, no death. Rather, it insists that in the face of such struggle and pain "...not one of them falls to the ground without your Father's knowledge." Jesus points to the singular importance of insignificant sparrows to underscore the unique importance of each one of us. We will hardly be able to trust in God's care of us if we do not believe that we are this important to God. It is precisely when we are disappointed that our faith and trust in God have not put an end to our hardship that we are being called to believe in this love and to trust that God will not abandon us in our sadness and fear. Our hardship might not be taken away, but we will not have to endure it alone.

This is the message in the account of Jeremiah's distress; it is the message in Jesus' reference to the sparrows; and it is the message in our own sadness and fear as we continue to struggle with a faceless enemy. Like those to whom these two passages were addressed, we should not think that we have nothing to do as we trust in God's care. It is precisely through each of us that God's care

unfolds. We experience this care in the unselfishness of the first responders, in those who stock our grocery stores, in those who work for Streets and Sanitation. We keep hearing: 'We are in this together.' If this is the case, then each of us must contribute to the 'common good.' This is our civic responsibility; it is also our religious responsibility. This is a question of justice. We must do what we can and then trust that God will not abandon us in our sadness and fear.

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