

12th Sunday in Ordinary Time (A)

June 21, 2026

“Fear”

Last week, we learned how Our Lord saw, summoned, and sent his twelve disciples on mission. They were told to cure the sick, expel demons, and cure lepers, in other words, to continue the work of Jesus.

This week, Jesus teaches, warns, and commands his chosen disciples before dispatching them on missionary journey. He describes three situations they will face: (1) hostility from those who would water down or sugar coat the gospel message entrusted to them; (2) physical persecution from those who refuse to accept the message; and (3) the lingering sensation that God has abandoned them.

Our Lord tells commands them three times “Do not fear” (vv. 26, 28, 31). The word “fear” comes from the Greek word *phobia*, meaning dread or terror. He tells them not to fear because fear is natural reaction to danger. We fear lots of things: declining health, dreadful diseases, rejection by loved ones or friends, demotion at work, destroyed reputation on-line, financial catastrophe, a scary future for our children and grandchildren, and our own sense that God has abandoned us.

If we are not careful, these fears can paralyze us, discourage us, inhibit us, pull us down, hold us back, and destroy the spirit of joy in our hearts. They are truly damaging.

The Journey in Faith is not smooth and easy. It is difficult and strewn with potholes because it is the journey of Jesus, who did not, as God, have faith, but taught us to believe. Jesus himself in the Garden of Olives and on the cross said it best in that question: “*My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?*” (Mt. 27:46). He felt what we feel at times: abandonment, isolation, desperation when life is falling apart.

There are two kinds of fears: *Unholy fears*, like the ones I just mentioned, and then there are *holy fears*. Holy fears are things we should fear, including rejecting God’s favor and closeness, losing our friendship with God, offending those we love and who loves us, giving up living by the Gospel, mortal sin, which leads to moral death, and most of all, the fires of Hell, or Gehenna. We should have a holy fear of these things, and act accordingly.

How do we face our unholy fears and develop the right kind of fear? We need courage, conviction, and hope. *Courage* is the grace that strengthens us to face our fears head on, and not allow them to confuse, paralyze, or dominate us. *Conviction* is the determination to move forward despite our fears and do what God wants us to do. *Hope* is trusting confidence in God's promise to be with us and achieve his purpose. These virtues can help us, but we have to pray for them.

Without courage, conviction, and hope, we cave into our fears and can become weather-vane Christians, like the preacher who was approached by some members of his congregation about a serious problem in the parish. Airing their grievances, they made all sorts of charges against those with whom they were at odds. Responding to their complaints, the preacher said, "You're absolutely right." Days later, another group came to him and told their side of the story. Responding to their side, the preacher said, "You're absolutely right." His wife, working in the kitchen on both occasions, overheard both conversations. As soon as the parishioners left, she came up and said to him, "You're about the most wishy-washy individual I've ever seen." To that, the preacher replied, "You're absolutely right."

We live in a scary world at times, but our fears don't have to conquer us. May the Virgin Mary, model of humility and courageous conviction, help us to have holy fear, so we can become joyful missionary disciples.

Next week, we will hear Our Lord challenge, invite, and assure his disciples before he leaves that place to preach and teach in other towns. God bless you.