

SPIRITUALITY

GOSPEL ACCLAMATION

cf. John 15:26b, 27a

R. Alleluia, alleluia.

The Spirit of truth will testify to me, says the Lord;

and you also will testify.

R. Alleluia, alleluia.

Gospel

Matt 10:26-33; L94A

Jesus said to the Twelve:

“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 your Father’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 Father.

But whoever denies me before others,

I will deny before my heavenly Father.”



Reflecting on the Gospel

Concealed and secret things tend to scare children (and sometimes adults, too!). Little ones are afraid of the dark because it conceals too much—they can’t see what might be trying to get them so they look under their beds for the boogey-man. They are frightened when they see their parents whispering together with knitted brows and worry written all over their faces. Our natural tendency is to avoid whatever frightens us, and this is true for both children and adults.

Fear paralyzes us, keeps us from acting and growing. Fear robs us of our freedom and hinders our judgment. Fear, however, can also at times be positive. A healthy fear can bring caution to a hasty response, can prompt us to go to the doctor when we don’t feel quite right, can bring us to install an alarm system in our homes to protect body and possessions. In this Sunday’s gospel Jesus talks about fear: whom and what we should fear and whom and what we need not fear.

Jesus begins with the bold statement, “Fear no one.” Yet, in the next breath he tells us to “be afraid of the one who can destroy / both soul and body.” Does Jesus contradict himself? No, not really. He is helping us sort out fear. We need not fear when we choose to live and “speak in the light” and acknowledge Jesus as Lord. Proclaiming the gospel can bring frightening results, for sure. People may misunderstand us, scorn us, turn on us. Certainly this happened to Jesus. We can overcome this fear, however. We know that when we align ourselves with Jesus and “proclaim on the housetops” what he has revealed to us, we are not alone. Our greatest source of audacity—of proclaiming Jesus’ Good News and acting boldly—is the assurance that God has every hair on our head counted. God counts us worthy

to be disciples of the divine Son, and even if others try to “kill the body,” God will protect and bring to everlasting Life those who are faithful.

We do need to fear when we choose infidelity and denial of Jesus in any form. This kills. This death we ought to fear. This death is not from some outside entity, but comes from inside ourselves. This death is our own doing; it is choosing our own selfish interests above acknowledging our identity in Christ and being consistent with his call to be faithful disciples. This death destroys our joy and balance in this life and threatens our eternal happiness.

Yes, Jesus says to us, “Fear no one.” While others might bring harm, disappointment, or sadness, these threats from outside ourselves cannot destroy God’s protection and care. We only need to keep Jesus’ continued Presence before us and act accordingly. Fear of being unfaithful, self-centered, and totally self-reliant is actually healthy and life-giving. Most days most of us deal with both what we ought to fear and what we do not need to fear. Jesus challenges us to fear what is really death-dealing: denial of him. The choice before us is to choose him. Choosing him will free us from the one thing that can kill us. Choosing him will give us Life.

Living the Paschal Mystery

Fearless or fearful? Which does our daily choosing reveal? We are fearless when we acknowledge God’s Presence and proclaim the Gospel by choosing integrity over dishonesty, by putting others’ good ahead of selfish whims, by uplifting others in our speech rather than tearing them down. We need to be fearful when we don’t think before we act, when we neglect thinking about God every day, when we estrange ourselves from what is right and good, when we turn our backs on Jesus.

Focusing the Gospel

Key words and phrases: Fear no one, speak in the light, be afraid of the one, acknowledges me, denies me

To the point: Jesus begins with the bold statement, “Fear no one.” Yet, in the next breath he tells us to “be afraid of the one who can destroy both soul and body.” Does Jesus contradict himself? No, not really. He is helping us sort out fear. We need not fear when we choose to live and “speak in the light” and acknowledge Jesus as Lord. We do need to fear when we choose infidelity and denial of Jesus in any form. This kills. This death we ought to fear. Fearless or fearful? Which does our daily choosing reveal?

Connecting the Gospel

to the first reading: Jeremiah spells out clearly those who ought to fear: those who denounce God’s prophet and want to take out their vengeance on him.

to experience: We readily fear perceivable dangers: a stalker, a weaving driver, an icy sidewalk. We don’t as readily fear hidden dangers, especially those that threaten our spiritual well-being.

Connecting the Responsorial Psalm

to the readings: Psalm 69 is the lament of a person in deadly danger. The danger is not from natural forces, illness, or personal crisis, but from other human beings who attack because this person has remained faithful to God. When the psalmist cries out to God, God listens. In joy, the psalmist calls all who are downcast or in bondage to praise God.

This psalm would surely have been prayed by Jeremiah (first reading) and it can surely be our prayer, too, as disciples of Jesus (gospel). If we remain faithful to Jesus, we will face danger from those who oppose him and his teachings. In the gospel Jesus acknowledges this danger head-on, but tells us not to fear, for God who values us beyond measure will protect us. Only one thing can destroy us: our own denial of Jesus. We can trust in God for protection, and we can trust in Jesus to “acknowledge” us before his “heavenly Father.” Can they trust in us?

to psalmist preparation: When you sing these psalm verses, you are not asking God to help you through a personal crisis, or an illness, or a financial difficulty. No, you are asking God to support you when you face the danger and opposition that comes from proclaiming what Jesus has revealed. Singing this responsorial psalm attests to your courage in discipleship and your trust in God. What gives you your courage? What gives you your confidence in God?

ASSEMBLY & FAITH-SHARING GROUPS

- I fear most . . . What allays my fears is . . .
- I choose darkness when . . . What helps me faithfully choose to live and speak “in the light” is . . .
- I am fearless about being a follower of Jesus when . . .

PRESIDERS

My preaching encourages myself and others to “Fear no one” and live boldly as Jesus did when . . .

DEACONS

My serving those in need helps allay these fears . . .

HOSPITALITY MINISTERS

The manner of my greeting those assembling for liturgy conveys that God cares intimately for each one of them when I . . .

MUSIC MINISTERS

What I fear most in my music making is . . . What gives me strength and courage is . . .

ALTAR MINISTERS

My serving at the altar helps me acknowledge and know Jesus more intimately when I . . .

LECTORS

To “speak in the light” means to me . . . When I do, my proclamation sounds like . . .

EXTRAORDINARY MINISTERS OF HOLY COMMUNION

Each time I say to a communicant “The Body [Blood] of Christ,” I acknowledge Jesus to be . . . myself and the communicant to be . . .