

Homily. 12th Sunday in Ordinary Time. Year. A. 24/25 June 2022.

Living has been described as a constant battle to face and overcome our fears. This is especially so with the greatest of our fears, that of suffering and the extinction of our present lives in death. Let's be honest here about this though; all of us have successes and failures in this contest. Sometimes we're able to vanquish our fears; at other times we succumb to them and have to learn ways to live with them.

We've got to remember that courage isn't an absence of fear. Only ignorant, foolhardy people feel no fear. Rather courage, as anyone who has faced crises and danger will tell you, is feeling our well founded fears and still doing the right, good and necessary thing regardless.

Jesus knew fear during his life, even mortal fear as his struggle in the garden of Gethsemane before his betrayal testifies. Nevertheless, he faced his fears, handing his life and destiny over to God with faith. There is very good evidence for saying this because the most repeated phrase of Jesus in the gospels is; Do not be afraid! Even in the 8 short verses of tonight's/today's gospel Jesus uses these words 3 times.

I said that Jesus faced and overcame his fears with faith, which is to say with the courage and confidence that comes from trust. This is what Jesus means when he says that we aren't to fear. Faith, trust and confidence in ourselves, in others and ultimately in God's loving power and providence is all that stands between us and falling into fear. This, thankfully, is enough to save us.

Our choice lies then between living in fear or living with faith. There are simply no other options open to us. This is yet another reason why Jesus constantly says to us; Do not be afraid; Fear no one; and why he's always greeting us with words of peace and comfort. Either we take him at his word and live accordingly as his sisters and brothers, or we decide to let fear rather than the God of peace reign over us and our ways every day.

Earlier on I said that in this tussle most of us have some successes and some failures. It's when we fail in faith and fall into fear that secrets are hidden within us and lies are told and lived by us. Our journey of faith through life then is one of moving ever deeper into faith and the freedom it brings, and away from the slavery and secrets of those who live in fear. This is one good reason why we always need to draw closer to our Lord and to each other, companions on the journey, and to hear and believe what we have here asked for in our Opening Prayer; Grant, O Lord, that we may always revere and love your holy name, for you never deprive of your guidance those you set firm on the foundation of your love.