

Fr. Nick Dant's Homily, Saint Matthew Catholic Church, Indianapolis
Twelfth Sunday in Ordinary Time, June 20-21, 2020, Cycle A

“Fear no one” Jesus says, as He challenges us to remain faithful to our call to be his disciples. “Fear no one!” Easier said than done I would say! One could say to Jesus: “Whatever happened to the prayer in Psalms, Hide me in the shadow of your wings,” when we fear our safety threatened?

We have to admit to ourselves we are easily frightened. Fear for ourselves and our families is the root of many of our problems it seems. Fear does stand in the way of our being true witnesses for Jesus. For example, we lie ourselves, or let others get away with lying because we are afraid of truth's consequences. We are selfish, or we hoard like a lot of folks did initially in the coronavirus pandemic, because we fear we won't have enough. Who cares about everybody else. Or we go along with the crowd, putting up with what we know is unacceptable (like racism, bigotry, discrimination) because we are afraid that integrity will cost too much.

Of course we are not mistaken about what the price of integrity may cost us sometimes. The Old Testament prophet Jeremiah knew the price of integrity. In remaining faithful to the truth, Jeremiah cries out to God: “I hear everybody whispering against me.” ...All those who were my friends are laying traps for me, just waiting for me to make a mistake. Yes, Jeremiah knew the cost of doing right, and yes he feared even for his own skin, but he overcame that fear and remained faithful to the mission of being a prophet for God.

Yet, Jesus tells us “Fear no one,” at least not those who can do no more than kill you. Well, Jesus, like Jeremiah, I do fear, but unlike Jeremiah, I do not know if I can conquer that fear. My body may not be the most beautiful thing in the world, and I kind of like my body. I certainly don't want to put myself through suffering, anguish, and rejection like Jeremiah did.

Yet, through our baptism Jesus has called us to be His prophets in the world – to speak and live the message of the Gospel. In baptism we were anointed with the oil of Chrism and this is what was prayed over us.

God the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ has freed you from sin, given you a new birth by water and the Holy Spirit, and welcomed you into his holy people. He now anoints you with the chrism of salvation. As Christ was anointed Priest, Prophet, and King, so may you live always as a member of his body, sharing everlasting life. Amen. We are all anointed to share in Jesus' ministry of being a Prophet.

And when we feel afraid, Jesus encourages us to remember that God is with us. As Prophets anointed by God in Baptism, we are called to read the signs of the times in the light of the Gospel of Jesus. We are called to live and speak the Gospel of Jesus in the world! Those prophetic words of the Gospel, many will recognize as a threat to status quo of living life. At times we will feel besieged like Jeremiah, and wonder if we go on as a follower of Jesus. At those times we do feel drained we just need to recall the words of Jesus: “You are worth more than many sparrows” ... “Even the hairs of your head are counted.” So do not be afraid!

When we live the Gospel boldly and are able to risk ourselves for the good of humanity, then we are acknowledging Christ alive and at work in the world through us.