

12th Sunday in Ordinary Time
Jer 20:10-13; Ps 69; Rom 5:12-15; Mt 10:26-33

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This Sunday our Old Testament readings reflect the sufferings of the righteous, who are persecuted. The prophet Jeremiah was a “type” (a model or precursor) of Christ. He was the prototypical prophet whose message was not only his words, but his life. Prophets performed symbolic actions (Hosea was told to marry an unfaithful woman), but Jeremiah went beyond: God told him not to marry or have children, nor to participate in normal social gatherings, like funerals or banquets, Jer 16:2, 8-9. His enemies sought his life, Jer 26. In the passage whence our first reading is taken, Jeremiah complains that God has treacherously seduced him; the prophet is scared (paranoia is only that if the persecution is not real!). Though Jeremiah has faith in God, he, unlike Jesus, must receive a second chance, a renewed vocation, Jer 15:10-21 (though cf. Is 49:4). Also unlike Jesus, Jeremiah prayed for vengeance on his enemies, rather than forgiveness (cf. Jer 18:19-23; Lk 23:34). But the “just sufferer” in the Old Testament becomes a model with which to understand Jesus; even more, Jesus, God’s Word, *is the prayer* in the psalms (the whole Old Testament speaks about Jesus, Lk 24:27; Acts 3:18, 24). Thus our psalm today is considered one of the most important ones for understanding Jesus (see, e.g., Jn 2:17).

The gospel reading provides us with a portrait of Jesus quite different than that of the discomfited Jeremiah. Jesus urges fearlessness, faith: God his Father has everything under his care. How can we be rid of “servile fear,” as St. Catherine of Siena calls it? By loving as Jesus did: “love casts out all fear,” 1 Jn 4:18. It is human to fear, and Jesus in the garden instinctively feared what would be done to him; his humanity, his flesh, was “weak” (Mk 14:38; 2 Cor 13:4). But Jesus struggled (this is the Greek meaning of “agony” in Lk 22:44) to do God’s will, not his own, and in this garden (Jn 18:1; 19:41; 20:15) overcame the first Adam’s rebellion against God’s will (wanting to be a god) in that garden. This is what Paul alludes to in the second reading. God in his almighty power and providence brought out great things for us from our own sin and nothingness: nothing is impossible for him!