

## Sunday, June 21, 2026 – Twelfth Sunday in Ordinary Time Year A

### First Reading - Jeremiah 20:10-13

A reading from the prophet Jeremiah

**He has delivered the soul of the needy from the hands of those who are evil.**

Jeremiah said:

‘I hear so many disparaging me,

“Terror from every side!

Denounce him! Let us denounce him!”

All those who used to be my friends  
watched for my downfall,

“Perhaps he will be seduced into error.

Then we will master him  
and take our revenge!”

But the Lord is at my side, a mighty hero;

my opponents will stumble, mastered,  
confounded by their failure;

everlasting, unforgettable disgrace will be theirs.

But you, Lord of Hosts, you who probe with justice,  
who scrutinise the loins and heart,

let me see the vengeance you will take on them,  
for I have committed my cause to you.

Sing to the Lord,

praise the Lord,

for he has delivered the soul of the needy  
from the hands of evil men.’

### Responsorial Psalm

Ps 68:8-10. 14. 17. 33-35. R. v.14

### Second Reading - Romans 5:12-15

A reading from the letter of St Paul to the Romans

**God's gift to us is nothing like our sin against him.**

Sin entered the world through one man, and through sin death, and thus death has spread through the whole human race because everyone has sinned. Sin existed in the world long before the Law was given. There was no law and so no one could be accused of the sin of ‘law-breaking’, yet death reigned over all from Adam to Moses, even though their sin, unlike that of Adam, was not a matter of breaking a law.

Adam prefigured the One to come, but the gift itself considerably outweighed the fall. If it is certain that through one man’s fall so many died, it is even more certain that divine grace, coming through the one man, Jesus Christ, came to so many as an abundant free gift.

## Gospel Acclamation

John 15:26. 27

Alleluia, alleluia!

The Spirit of Truth will bear witness to me, says the Lord,  
and you also will be my witnesses.

Alleluia!

## Gospel - Matthew 10:26-33

A reading from the holy Gospel according to Matthew

**Do not fear those who can kill the body.**

Jesus instructed the Twelve as follows: 'Do not be afraid. For everything that is now covered will be uncovered, and everything now hidden will be made clear. What I say to you in the dark, tell in the daylight; what you hear in whispers, proclaim from the house-tops.

'Do not be afraid of those who kill the body but cannot kill the soul; fear him rather who can destroy both body and soul in hell. Can you not buy two sparrows for a penny? And yet not one falls to the ground without your Father knowing. Why, every hair on your head has been counted. So there is no need to be afraid; you are worth more than hundreds of sparrows.

'So if anyone declares himself for me in the presence of men, I will declare myself for him in the presence of my Father in heaven. But the one who disowns me in the presence of men, I will disown in the presence of my Father in heaven.'

### Precious in God's Eyes

#### A Reflection on the Gospel- 12th Sunday in Ordinary Time Year A

(Matthew 10:26-33)

Veronica Lawson RSM

Many of those who once looked through the barbed-wire fences of Australia's detention centres carry personal stories of fear of persecution. One such story, the story of Najaf Mazari, is beautifully narrated by Najaf and Robert Hillman in their joint work, *The Rugmaker of Mazar-e-Sharif*. Najaf is an Afghani Hazara who suffered persecution and torture at the hands of the Taliban. He escaped to Australia via Indonesia in 2002. After some time in detention, he established a rug making business in suburban Melbourne. He was reunited with his wife Hakeema and daughter Maria in 2008 and became an Australian citizen in June 2014.

Some first century Christian groups, including Matthew's community, were a bit like the Afghani Hazaras in that they are persecuted simply on account of who they are vis-à-vis those who seek exclusive political and cultural power, although persecution by the Taliban is no longer restricted to the Hazara community. The suffering people of Afghanistan have every reason to fear bodily harm and even death, as suffered by Jesus and his followers. Jesus himself experienced fear in the face of his impending suffering and political execution. Yet Jesus tells his disciples, not once but three times, not to fear those who kill the body.

How are these words to be understood? To return to the story of Najif: the Taliban had power to destroy his body, but no power over his spirit. A man of deep faith, supported by a family who sacrificed their own comfort and placed their trust in God (Allah), he survived against the most incredible odds. Even if he had died in the effort to find freedom, his faith in the fullness of life with God would remain, in contrast with the bullying power of the Taliban who could kill the body but not an indomitable spirit.

Trust in God is at the heart of Jesus' response to suffering. The disciples are sent to proclaim, in the marketplace or from the "housetops", the gospel they have received in the security of the household. If they acknowledge Jesus, he will in turn "acknowledge" them before God. They can expect rejection and humiliation. This is not to deter them from their mission. They are not to give up the struggle or capitulate in the face of persecution. Like all of God's creatures, including the sparrows, they are precious in God's eyes and will not be abandoned. On the contrary, even the hairs on their heads are numbered by God. Trust in God is the appropriate response to suffering endured for the sake of God's empire as opposed to the empire of Rome. Trust in God does not take away the pain. We join with asylum seekers, refugees, unwanted migrants, the hungry and the homeless for the justice that is their right. They are precious in God's eyes. They are precious in our eyes and must not be abandoned.