

## FEAR NO ONE, FOR GOD IS WITH YOU

Dearest friends in Christ, today's readings bring us into the heart of what it means to be a disciple: to walk in truth even when the world is against you, to trust in grace that is greater than sin, and to remember that we are never alone because God sees and values us.

Jeremiah speaks from a place many of us know: betrayal, mockery, and fear. "All my friends are on the watch for any misstep of mine..." "Denounce him!" He was persecuted for speaking God's word. Yet in the same breath he declares, "But the Lord is with me, like a mighty champion." St. John Chrysostom reminds us that the prophet was not conquered by fear, because he placed his hope in God alone. Jeremiah shows us a hard reality: faithfulness does not always remove suffering, but it always brings God's presence into the suffering.

When we are talked about, excluded, or misunderstood for doing what is right, we walk in Jeremiah's footsteps. And like him, we can still sing, "Sing to the Lord, praise the Lord, for he has rescued the life of the poor from the hands of the wicked."

St. Paul puts Jeremiah's struggle, and our own, into the bigger picture of salvation history. Through Adam, sin and death entered the world. But through Christ, the gift came. "If by that one person's transgression the many died, how much more did the grace of God and the gracious gift of the one person Jesus Christ abound for the many." St. Augustine puts it simply: "Because of one man, we were born to die. Because of one Man, we are reborn to live forever. The fall was great, but the redemption is greater." This is the heart of the Gospel. We are not defined by our worst moment, but by Christ's best moment on the Cross.

Then Jesus speaks directly to us in the Gospel: "Nothing concealed will not be revealed... Do not be afraid of those who kill the body." He calls us to courage rooted in truth. Speak it. Live it. God will vindicate. And He gives us the reason not to fear: our Father's care. "Are not two sparrows sold for a small coin? Yet not one of them falls to the ground without your Father's knowledge... So do not be afraid; you are worth more than many sparrows." St. Gregory the Great says, "If God numbers the hairs of our head, He also numbers our tears. No sorrow escapes His notice." You are seen. You are counted. You are loved beyond measure. St. Thérèse of Lisieux, who called herself "a little sparrow," trusted this promise: "I will not fear, for Jesus is with me. He will not forget me."

So what does this mean for us this week? When you are afraid, remember Jeremiah. Persecution for truth is not a sign that God has left you. It is often a sign that you are close to Him. Pray his words when you feel surrounded: "The Lord is with me, like a mighty champion."

When you are discouraged, remember Paul. Your sin is not stronger than God's grace. No matter how deep the fall, His gift is deeper. Grace abounds all the more. When you are anxious, remember Jesus. You are worth more than sparrows. Your job interview, your family's health, your future, your reputation, none of it is hidden from the Father. Speak the truth in love, and leave the results to Him.

Do not bury the truth out of fear. Do not doubt the power of grace. Do not think you are

forgotten. May the Blessed Virgin Mary, who stood faithful at the foot of the Cross without fear, and St. Joseph, guardian of the Holy Family, pray for us that we too may sing with Jeremiah, believe with Paul, and live with the courage of Christ.