**“Do not Afraid”**

All our readings today point us to the phrase **“Do not be afraid.”** This phrase can be found in the Bible 365 times! This means for every day of the year, we can find a passage in the Bible that says **“Do not be afraid.”** The antithesis of fear is trust in God. When we are greatly troubled by trials, tribulations, and especially fear, God always invites us to trust in Him. God invites us to trust in Him that He has our back and He would never abandon those who love and trust in Him.

In our first reading, we heard Prophet Jeremiah appealing to God to come to his aid. He felt the evil plot of his enemies. Even his so called friends wanted to trap him so they could harm him. They had surrounded him like a pack of wild wolfs ready to pounce on him should he make any wrong move. Jeremiah was asking God to let him see his enemies’ downfall because God always comes to the rescue of those who have trust in Him.

Like Jeremiah, we are also called to have trust in God whenever we are going through trials, and tribulations. Trials and tribulation are ways God tests the just and probe the minds and hearts of those who love Him to see how deep their love is for Him, and how faithful they would be to Him when they go through trials and tribulations. So, **“Do not be afraid.”**

God is asking us, do we blame Him for our troubles and not pray to Him for His grace? Do we abandon Him and take matters into our own hands thinking we can solve our problems on our own? Or do we run to Him like Jeremiah knowing that we can do nothing without Him? God wants us to know that He is our God who brings greater good out of evil.

In St. Paul’s letter to the Romans, he points out that our experiencing of trials and tribulations is due to sin and that sin and death came into the world because of the fall of our first parents. However, God in His love and mercy, sent His only beloved Son who is the Gift from the Father. So, **“Do not be afraid,”** because the grace that comes through Jesus Christ is far infinitely much more superior to the original sin committed by our first parents who were deceived by the father of lies, the devil.

The gift of grace that Jesus Christ brings, is for all humanity. However, it is up to each individual to use their free-will to accept His grace. Accepting Jesus’ grace leads to everlasting life; while rejection of His grace leads to eternal damnation with the devil and his fallen angels. It is by Jesus’ death and resurrection that His grace overflows to all humanity. Just as God raised Jesus up from the dead, so will He by His love and mercy raise our bodies up to be with Him on the last day. So, **“Do not be afraid”** of anyone.

In our Gospel reading, Jesus tells His apostles **"Do not be afraid"** three times. He wanted them to be bold in proclaiming what He told them in secret or privately, to the whole world no matter what persecution, trial, or tribulations they might encounter. He told them they should not be afraid if they have to lose their lives in the process of revealing His Gospel to the ends of the earth.

Jesus assured them that God, who created all things and knows all things similarly to how He knows about the death of a sparrow and knows the number of the hairs on their heads would know about everything that happens to them. That has Jeremiah asked for, God would render justice in their favor at the end of time. In not so many words, Jesus told them **“Do not be afraid”** because God will protect them. And, He would never deprive His guidance to those He sets firm on the foundation of His love.

As we are in a very difficult time in our world, with COVID-19, the race problems, and violence going on in our world, Jesus is telling us not to be afraid because He is with us until the end of time. He tells us that He will never abandon us as His children.

Fear is something that came into the world as a bi-product of sin. It was after Adam and Eve sinned and God called on Adam that Adam responded that He was ***‘afraid’*** to be in the presence of God. Since then, fear has been part of our lives. It manifests itself when we worry, when we are restless, and when we have anxiety. However, God is telling us not to be afraid because He has our backs and would be ready for us to have trust in Him. He tell us, He is the perfect Love that casts away all fears.

As we come to receive Jesus in the Eucharist, let us ask for His grace so that our fears would be cast away.