

The Twelfth Sunday in Ordinary Time/Year A –
24/25 June 2017 – (Conclusion of the Introductory Rites)
Our Lady of Victory Parish Community
HOMILY

1st Reading:

Jeremiah 20:10-13

- “I hear the whisperings of many . . . Denounce! Let us denounce him! . . . ‘Perhaps he will be trapped; then we can prevail, and take our vengeance on him.’ . . . “But the Lord is with me, “O Lord of hosts, you who test the just, who probe mind and heart, “Sing to the Lord, praise the Lord, for he has rescued the life of the poor from the power of the wicked!”
“

Responsorial Psalm:

Psalm 69 - *Sung*

2nd Reading:

Romans 5:12-15

- “Through one man sin entered the world, and through sin, death, . . . But the gift is not like the transgression. For if by the transgression of the one the many died, how much more did the grace of God and the gracious gift of one man Jesus Christ overflow for the many.”

GOSPEL:

MATTHEW 10:26-33

- “Fear no one. Nothing is concealed that will not be revealed, nor secret that will not be known. What I say to you in the darkness, speak in the light; what you hear whispered, proclaim on the housetops. And do not be afraid of those who kill the body . . . rather, be afraid of the one who can destroy both soul and body in Gehenna. Are not two sparrows sold for a small coin? Yet not one of them falls to the ground without your Father’s knowledge. Even all the hairs of your head are counted. So do not be afraid; you are worth more than many sparrows. Everyone who acknowledges me before others I will acknowledge before my heavenly Father. But whoever denies me . . . I will deny before my heavenly Father.”

I. It seems to me that the Scriptures are very much about “**value**” this weekend: how we **value** ourselves . . . how we **value** others . . . even how we **value** God and our relationship with God . . . but also, how **much** God **values** each and every one of us . . .

Some definitions of the word **value**, as *Webster’s* defines it: relative worth, merit, or importance; equivalent worth or return in money, material, services . . .

Consider Jeremiah, a man of God; a “prophet” of God who finds himself in the midst of persecution. On first hearing this passage, we might think that this man is just be a bit paranoid: he hears whispers; they carry with them a message to “denounce” him; he is convinced that those who were his friends are out to get him. This persecution is not something that is simply found in his head . . . it is real. This persecution is not because of anything Jeremiah has done that is wrong. Rather, it is the result of everything he has done that is right . . . and just . . . and in response to God’s initiative through him. Jeremiah was not respected . . . nor was he, **or his message valued**.

Jeremiah suffered rejection . . . alienation . . . persecution . . . and **was able to do this**, as his words of hope tell us, knowing that the Lord **valued** him and his sacrifice . . . Knowing that the Lord **was** acting through

him . . . on behalf of the Lord's own people before . . . believing that the Lord would continue to do so . . . for the Lord **is** faithful . . . the Lord **is** to be trusted . . . the Lord **is** worthy of praise.

Jeremiah's story is our story. For when we recognize the great **value** we are in the eyes, mind and heart of God . . . we live life differently . . . we recognize the value of all that God has given us . . . the value of others . . . and we live and act differently . . . courageously . . . faithfully . . . as disciples.

II. "[Many of us have, [at times], experienced [rejection] [because] we [just] do not fit the definition of what [some] consider **desirable** . . . [we don't appear to be a good return on their investment.] [The] world tends to limit value and worth into certain **limited** categories [and] if we do not fit in to one of those limited categories, we do not [appear] to **have** value . . . [be of **value**.]"

The gospel challenges [this] way of thinking about value. It challenges **us** to see the world, and our self . . . **others**, and certainly **GOD**, differently. It does so by presenting a truth and a strategy.

The truth is: God considers **everything** valuable. [The shady corner in our back yard

is as valuable to God as is the Grand Canyon.] [The sparrow is as valuable as the eagle that soars in the mountain. For God, value is not rare or limited or defined by any other means beyond God having created all that is . . . **all** is of **value** . . . **all** has **worth**. **All** that God has created has **meaning** and **purpose** . . . including each and every one of us.]”

“[The strategy: the Gospel invites us] to see the world . . . ourselves . . . others] the way that God sees us. . . . to value everything that [is good, believing that, even the seemingly insignificant] details of our lives [are not only of value to God, but can be . . . **will be**, transformed by God and used for a good purpose . . .

[To limit value to only certain categories . . . certain people . . . only big moments . . . then far too much of our life will be **value-less** **barren** . . . **absent** of joy.] It [becomes] more and more difficult for us to recognize our **own worth** and **value**, because value is limited only to rare categories of people, moments, and things. The more that we can see the world as God sees it, the more that we can see the value in every person and in every moment . . . the more that we can rejoice in the details of our lives . . . the more our whole life is **filled** with value. Then . . . it is easier for us to recognize the true value that God has given to us.]”

III. Perhaps the more for us to recognize and see the **value** in our weekly gathering . . . a **value** we are not only called to fully enter in to, but invite and engage others to do so as well.

We have been gathered by God . . . **who values our presence** and we have responded by our **yes** to that presence. We joined in a procession . . . visually and in our song . . . to focus on what God is about to do in our midst . . . we have called to mind our sins and acclaimed God for His mercy and we have joined with the Angels, who, on that glorious day centuries ago, praised God for once again joining heaven and earth through the birth of Jesus, God's only Son . . . we have **begun** to be formed into that "communion of persons" . . . **all** of us, **valued** by God . . . and reminded of how we are to enter into this time of great value **with** God.

These ***Introductory Rites*** are then brought to a close with what has been called the "**Opening Prayer**", but, as our "playbook" shows it . . . the "**Collect**".

First, a story about this "**Collect**", and not necessarily how it originated in the history of the Church . . . but more . . . how it was understood one time in recent years in the history of our Parish.

Share story about the Ushers at the Easter Vigil of 2016 – “Collect” interpreted to be “take up the Collection.

It begins with an **invitation** . . . in **part**, to get our attention . . . but not the same as when the umpire yells at the ball game “**Play ball!**” . . . It is about getting our attention that it is **time** for each of us to take a few moments to present to God what we . . . as individuals . . . perhaps as a community . . . want to put before God . . . desiring that God, who **values** us . . . will transform what each of us offers . . . “**Let us pray**” . . . a time when **silence** is called for, once again . . . so we can do just that . . . present to God what each of us wishes to place before God . . .

Then . . . the priest/Presider **sums** up all of what has been spoken in silence . . . He **collects** these many prayers . . . presents them as one, to the Father, in and through Christ and by the power of the Holy Spirit.

Collect, in Latin, literally means to “**gather together**” . . . beginning with the **Invitation** . . . “**Let us pray** . . . “

and “**address**” to God . . . “**Grant, O Lord,**”

a ***“petition”*** on behalf of all who have gathered . . . and even beyond . . . who are being formed into a “communion of persons” . . . a petition that lets God know that **WE** know, not only **how** God **has** acted but how we **believe** God **will** act . . . ***“that we may always revere and love your holy name . . . for you never deprive of your guidance those you set firm on the foundation of love. . . . and a “conclusion” . . . “Through our Lord Jesus Christ, your Son, who lives and reigns with you in the unity of the Holy Spirit, one God, for ever and ever.” . . . Amen!***

“God . . . you know what each of us needs . . . do this for us in our need . . . as you have always done . . . hear the voice of your Son, Jesus, with whom we are joined through the gift of Baptism . . . and with whom, along with your Holy Spirit are one, glorious, magnificent God who we value and who values each and every one of us . . . for all eternity.” Amen!

The very wording of this ***Collect***, underscores ***the mediation of Christ*** and our ***belief*** in the ***Trinity . . . the ultimate “communion of persons”*** by the inclusion of the ***Holy Spirit*** . . . and, with our collective ***“AMEN”***, all gathered give their ***“yes”*** to this prayer, making it your own. Clearly, we acknowledge that we are very much **in** God’s presence . . . prepared and disposed to hear God

speak, once again, through God's inspired Word . . . in and through the ***Liturgy of the Word***, which will be where we pick up in the weeks ahead . . . as well as the ***Liturgy of the Eucharist***, the ***Concluding Rites***, along with some more on the importance of ***silence, singing*** and ***common posture*** in the Liturgy.