

## **Readings and commentary 12 OT Year A**

### **Celebration Summary: Bryan M. Cones**

“Terror on every side!” Jeremiah’s ominous words in the first reading remind us that the privilege of serving God comes with consequences. God’s message is a challenge to our world, and we its messengers are likely to suffer if we are faithful to its service. Being a prophet in the biblical sense--calling God’s people and the world to faithfulness and justice--is no easy path.

Today’s liturgy, though, is an antidote for fear. We find confidence as we praise our Father, our “guide and protector” (opening prayer), “strength of his people . . . our shepherd for ever” (entrance antiphon), “a mighty champion” (first reading). Jesus assures us in the Gospel that we need not fear those “who kill the body but cannot kill the soul.” Even the hairs of our head are counted! With such a God among us, we dare to “proclaim on the housetops” what we have heard, for it is our faithfulness to the Gospel message and our courage in its service that will be the final measure of our salvation.

Our confidence in God’s constant care calls forth our praise, and so “we rejoice to call” God “Father,” for God is “ever close to us” (alternative opening prayer); our Eucharist, is always, is a “sacrifice of praise” (prayer over the gifts). Today’s liturgy must ring with confident trust. The task laid upon us is difficult, but the promise great. With Jeremiah in the first reading, we must cry out: “Sing to the Lord, praise the Lord, for he has rescued the life of the poor from the power of the wicked!”

### **Lectionary Summary: Glenn CJ Byer**

The first reading from the prophet Jeremiah contains a lament and a declaration of confidence in God who is the source of his strength. As a prophet, Jeremiah experienced pain and suffering for the message that he was charged to deliver to Israel. The first part of today’s reading tells of the struggles he experienced. The last part of the reading expresses his confident assurance that God “who has rescued the life of the poor from the power of the wicked” is his strength.

The Gospel reading from Matthew follows on this theme of enduring suffering for the sake of the message. It is part of Jesus instruction to the twelve regarding their mission. “Fear no one!” “Do not be afraid!” “Even all the hairs of your head are counted.” These admonitions are to shore up the apostles who in the era when Matthew’s Gospel was written toward the end of the first century were no doubt experiencing opposition and persecution for their persistence in proclaiming the message of Jesus. Those who “acknowledge him” will be acknowledged by God in heaven. This is the promise to the apostles and the promised to us. The Romans reading immediately follows the selection we heard last week. Paul is reflecting on depth of sin that pervades all humanity, Jew and Gentile alike due to the sin of Adam. Jesus is seen as the new Adam, unstained by

sin and giving salvation to all, whether followers of the Law (Jews), or those subject to natural law (Gentiles—everybody else).

## 12 OT Year A By Dale J. Sieverding

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### First Reading Jeremiah 20:10-13

*He has rescued the life of the poor from the power of the wicked.*

### A reading from the Book of the Prophet Jeremiah

Jeremiah said:

"I hear the whisperings of many:

'Terror on every side!

Denounce! let us denounce him!

All those who were my friends

are on the watch for any misstep of mine.

'Perhaps he will be trapped; then we can prevail,

and take our vengeance on him.'

But the LORD is with me, like a mighty champion:

my persecutors will stumble, they will not triumph.

In their failure they will be put to utter shame,

to lasting, unforgettable confusion.

O LORD of hosts, you who test the just,

who probe mind and heart,  
let me witness the vengeance you take on them,  
for to you I have entrusted my cause.  
Sing to the LORD,  
praise the LORD,  
for he has rescued the life of the poor  
from the power of the wicked!"

## The word of the Lord

### Jeremiah 20:10-13 Commentary by John Paul Heil

Main Theme: God rescues the persevering prophet from the power of the wicked. Like the prophet Jeremiah we Christians are called to a prophetic mission to bear witness to the word and will of God by speaking out and working for the causes of social justice and peace in our time--the respect for the sacredness of all human life, an end to racism, prejudice, and discrimination, an end to violence and war, etc. When the prophet Jeremiah bore witness to the word of God, he experienced difficulties and rejection. His friends turned into enemies looking for ways to denounce and entrap him. We can expect similar difficulties and rejection in our prophetic mission as Christians. Rather than abandoning his prophetic mission, Jeremiah placed his complete confidence in God to enable him to prevail over his enemies: "But the Lord is with me, like a mighty champion: my persecutors will stumble, they will not triumph." Although God "tests" those who prophetically work for justice, he will not allow opponents to prevail. Like Jeremiah we need to persevere in our prophetic mission by entrusting our causes for justice and right to God, singing and praising the Lord who "has rescued the life of the poor from the power of the wicked!" ©2005, OCP. All rights reserved.

### Responsorial Psalm Psalm 69:8-10, 14, 17, 33-35

℟(14c) Lord, in your great love, answer me.

For your sake I bear insult,  
and shame covers my face.  
I have become an outcast to my brothers,  
a stranger to my mother's children,  
because zeal for your house consumes me,  
and the insults of those who blaspheme you fall upon me.

℟ Lord, in your great love, answer me.

I pray to you, O LORD,  
for the time of your favor, O God!  
In your great kindness answer me

with your constant help.  
Answer me, O LORD, for bounteous is your kindness;  
in your great mercy turn toward me.

**R** Lord, in your great love, answer me.

"See, you lowly ones, and be glad;  
you who seek God, may your hearts revive!  
For the LORD hears the poor,  
and his own who are in bonds he spurns not.  
Let the heavens and the earth praise him,  
the seas and whatever moves in them!"

**R** Lord, in your great love, answer me.

**Psalm 69:8-10, 14, 17, 33-35 Commentary by Deacon Owen Cummings**

There are three movements in Psalm 69 as it is presented to us in the liturgy. Movement I, the first stanza, describes the situation of the psalmist. It has the shape of a lament. It is marked by insult, shame, being an outcast and a stranger. Verse 9 is interesting and perhaps revealing, "Zeal for your house consumes me." The psalmist is describing his love for the Temple in Jerusalem, and so for God's presence. It may be revealing because he is in exile in Babylon, the Temple is in ruins, and so in a sense is his life. Movement II, the second stanza, sees the psalmist turning to his God, making a plea for help in his depressing and dire circumstances. In verse 14 he acknowledges God's chesed, "faithful love," and yet again in verse 17 he recognizes that "bounteous is (God's) chesed, kindness." Far from being a simple attribute of God, this word chesed, "kindness, or love," comes close to expressing God's very identity. "Kindness" is what God is, as it were. Movement III breaks out into thanksgiving. God's kindness is such that he hears "his own who are in bonds," and responds to them. The thanksgiving of the psalmist ends on a cosmic note, as even creation is summoned to sing with thanks God's praise. Praying the psalm today, knowing that God is "Kindness," or better in the Johannine word "Love," we may be confident of his response. © 2005, OCP. All rights reserved.

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

*The gift is not like the transgression.*

**A reading from the Letter of Saint Paul to the Romans**

Brothers and sisters:  
Through one man sin entered the world,  
and through sin, death,  
and thus death came to all men, inasmuch as all sinned—  
for up to the time of the law, sin was in the world,

though sin is not accounted when there is no law.  
But death reigned from Adam to Moses,  
even over those who did not sin  
after the pattern of the trespass of Adam,  
who is the type of the one who was to come.

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 the one man Jesus Christ  
overflow for the many.

### **The word of the Lord**

#### **Gospel Acclamation John 15:26b, 27a**

✠ Alleluia, alleluia.

The Spirit of truth will testify to me, says the Lord;  
and you also will testify.

✠ Alleluia, alleluia.

#### **Gospel Matthew 10:26-33**

*Do not be afraid of those who kill the body.*

#### **A reading from the holy Gospel according to Matthew**

Jesus said to the Twelve:

"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 but cannot kill the soul;  
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 before others,

I will deny before my heavenly Father."

## The Gospel of the Lord

### Matthew 10:26-33 Commentary by Fr. Eugene Hensell, OSB

The refrain that runs through this gospel passage bringing all the elements together is, "...do not be afraid" (Mt 10:26). Jesus is addressing his disciples. Previously he has described a variety of things the opponents can and might do to the disciples. Such dangers could easily intimidate a follower of Jesus from publicly proclaiming his or her faith. Jesus declares that at the final judgment everything will be known so there is no reason to keep one's faith a secret even now. Therefore the disciples are not to keep their faith concealed in clandestine night time meetings. They are to bring their faith to the public arena and proclaim it so that everyone can hear the good news (Mt 10:27).

The disciples are also not to fear opponents because they cannot probe to the depth of one's person where faith is really rooted (Mt 10:28). The body can be harmed but that deep interior faith level enjoyed by every believer can never be touched by even the most dangerous of enemies. And finally, the disciples are not to fear because they are highly valued by God (Mt 10:29-31). If God cares for sparrows which are not the most highly valued creatures on earth, how much more will God care for disciples who are indeed held in high esteem?

It is important that disciples bear witness to Jesus here on earth (Mt 10:32-33). Those who do will receive acknowledgment by Jesus before God at the final judgment. Those who fail to do this will be denied by Jesus before God. This all indicates that how we live our faith now will be extremely important for how we are judged then at the end time. © 2005, OCP. All rights reserved.

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