

June 21, 2026—12th Sunday in Ordinary Time

The Prophet Jeremiah is a Christ figure in his suffering, but also his trust in God. His message to the Jewish people of the time was extremely unpopular. He told them that the Babylonians, the current great power, would destroy Jerusalem, unless they surrendered to them. No one wanted to hear that message! In the First Reading, Jeremiah reported on his persecution: **‘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.”’** Like Jesus, he was rejected by his own people and arrested and imprisoned and beaten.

The prophet, even during these trials, trusted in the Lord’s Providence. He said at the end of this passage, **“Sing to the Lord, praise the Lord, for He has rescued the life of the poor from the power of the wicked!”**

At times, we all succumb to fear and worry about our lives or loved ones or the Church or our country. If we listen to Jesus, we should not be afraid, even in the midst of our sufferings. Point blank, He says, **“Fear no one.”** When He spoke these words, His own rejection, suffering and death were in the future and He knew exactly what was to happen to Him. The first reason we should not be afraid is because God is with us. Even if He seems far away; He is not. Jesus expresses this by saying how intimately God knows everything that happens in nature and with us. **“Are not two sparrows sold for a small coin? Yet not one of them falls to the ground without your Father’s knowledge.”**

It is getting easier with each passing year for me, but God knows how many hairs are on my head! That is a detail that most would think unimportant, but Jesus wants us to know that God is aware of everything that concerns us.

St. Paul wrote to the Romans that while sin entered the world through the first Adam, the saving death of Christ is infinitely greater than sin. **“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 second reason we should not be afraid is because our lives are not only about this world. The outcome is meant to be eternal life. **“Do not be afraid of those who kill the body but cannot kill the soul”**, He said. He reminds us that there is one who can destroy both body and soul in the fires of Gehenna, the word He regularly uses for hell. It is unrepented mortal sin that separates us from God for

all eternity. We like the pleasures of the senses, of the body, but losing them is nothing compared to losing our soul! We are made for everlasting life.

On this Father's Day, I want to reflect on the meaning of a Christian father. No one is perfect, but God is calling fathers to live up to their important vocation. The first characteristic of a Catholic father is that he imitates Christ. In the passage from Ephesians, chapter 5, St. Paul compares a husband to Christ, the Bridegroom of the Church. He wrote, **"Husbands love your wives, as Christ loved the Church and gave Himself up for her"** (5:25). That word "gave" means Jesus' sacrifice on the cross. A husband is to lay down his life for his wife and family like Jesus did on the Cross for our salvation. While we honor our service members who sometimes must lay down their lives for their country, a husband must learn to die to himself on a daily basis. He doesn't hesitate to forego pleasures and things he wants so that he can be available for his wife and children.

The second principle is that Catholic fathers embrace responsibility instead of running away from it. Recently, I heard someone put it this way, **"Boys live for themselves, men live for others."** It ruins families when men do not grow up and instead act the way they did as teens or college kids; they continue to make themselves the center of their lives, rather than others. They don't discipline their own appetites; they give into every desire for comfort, for food, for entertainment, for sexual pleasure; they don't control their temper. This makes a man weak, morally and physically; he doesn't stand for anything, but falls for every impulse. On the other hand, Catholic husbands and fathers embrace self-discipline and are ready to defend and protect their family. They keep evil out of the home in the form of pornography and other worldly things that destroy the innocence of their children.

The third principle is that a Catholic husband and father realizes that he and his family are made for eternity. It is so inspiring to see a man kneeling in prayer and saying his Rosary or going to Confession to humbly acknowledge that he is a sinner and needs God's mercy. They make Sunday holy with Mass attendance even if they are tired; they lead their family in prayer, rather than waiting for their wife to initiate it. The most important thing to a Catholic father is to form his children in virtue and right living and self-discipline so that they will be ready to live well for their future spouse and family and meet the Lord Jesus when He calls them from this world. In every way, he lets his children know that they are a son or daughter of God and have great worth in the sight of God; of course, he must believe that of himself, first.

We priests have similar challenges as spiritual fathers; we must overcome our weaknesses and failings, too. The world wants us to be mediocre; God is calling you to greatness! Let's pray for the virtue of fortitude for all fathers on this Father's Day. We need courageous fathers who live for their wife and children to save the Church in our day. St. Joseph, chaste guardian of the Holy Family, pray for us!