

# Weekly Sunday Readings Reflections

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## Twelfth Sunday of Ordinary Time - June 21, 2026

"Fear no one."

Question of the Week: *What is it that you fear most?*

- **FIRST READING:** Jeremiah 20:10-13
  - he has rescued the life of the poor
- **RESPONORIAL:** Psalm 69:8-10, 14, 17, 33-35
  - *R. Lord, in your great love, answer me.*
- **SECOND READING:** Romans 5:12-15
  - how much more did the grace of God and the gracious gift of the one man Jesus Christ overflow for the many.
- **GOSPEL:** Matthew 10:26—33
  - What I say to you in the darkness, speak in the light

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### **Reading 1: Through Evil Times**

*Q: What "dark times" have you lived through? How did you live through these times?*

Jeremiah felt misunderstood. As a holy man who prophesied just before the Babylonian exile, Jeremiah faced the wrath of the king's court. For he could see the coming calamity and the blindness of the king's advisors

Judah was nothing more than a city-state centered around Jerusalem, a mere speck in the eye of the regional powers at the time. Egypt to the south. Babylon to the north and east. Playing one against the other was an invitation to disaster. In the end, Judah played that game and was destroyed.

How did Jeremiah live life in the face of a hostile leadership? He toyed with despair, as he mimicked the machinations of his enemies. [20:10] But, in the end, he remembered the

One who caused him to prophesy. And the One who would save him. Jeremiah's enemies would see their shame and fall! [20:11-13]

Jeremiah saw the bigger picture. The success of those who lie and steal, spread rumor and slander will not last. In the end, their secret plans will be known. And their character will be revealed. The good will see the light of day. God will do this!

*Q: Have you ever been the target of gossip, rumor, or character assassination? How has God helped you these times?*

### **Responsorial: Payback**

*Q: Have you ever prayed for revenge when you felt oppressed by others?*

Payback. If there was ever a temptation in times of personal siege, it's for payback, revenge, dark karma. We all are tempted to

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demand payback at one time or another, but are we honest and brazen enough to pray for it? In the light of the gospels, that thought is "a little tacky" at best, highly inappropriate at worst. But that didn't stop the ancient Israelites to seek payback, even in prayer. In fact, they felt their honor demanded it.

Psalm 69 was a lament song that asked for divine retribution. This psalm can be divided into six parts: 1) opening prayer for salvation, 2) lament, 3) prayer for salvation, 4) lament, 5) curse of enemies, and 6) final doxology. Notice the repetition of themes seemed to heighten the core of the hymn: the curse of enemies.

This lament, along with the opening prayer, echoed the same themes from Jeremiah. Like the prophet, the psalmist was hounded by close friends and family members (69:8), yet was fully known by God. His enemies were numerous and powerful. Despite personal repentance for the nation, the psalmist gained little comfort. Even the watchmen gossiped about the psalmist; he was the butt of jokes and the subject of drunkard songs. From the rich to the poor, the singer was reviled by all in society. Yet, the psalmist remained faithful and was willing to endure irrational reproach. As you read the psalm, you will notice phrases that sound familiar. They should, for the evangelists used the tone and snippets of the hymn for their Passion narratives. John 15:25 used 69:4; Matthew 27:34 used 69:21. Indeed, the psalm's loneliness and lament became a backdrop for the Passion. The tone of the psalm dovetailed with the suffering of the Messiah.

It's easy to want payback, especially when we have been wronged. If such a temptation rears

its ugly head, maybe we should do what the psalmist did. Do not shy away, but put our feelings honestly before God. Sometimes, sharing the state of the heart with God is the first step toward justice and healing. It may not gain us payback, but it will achieve something much greater.

*Q: How have you placed your dark emotions before God? How has your honesty healed you?*

## **Reading 2: One Thing Leads to Another**

*Q: How do you "connect the dots" in a problem? What logic or process do you use to get to the bottom of a problem?*

These verses sum up St. Paul's view of salvation. This is his world view and logic. He presumed the vision of Genesis: God made the world "good." The sorry state of the affairs in the world could be laid squarely at the feet of humanity. Evil existed because people sinned; they disobeyed the will of a benevolent Creator. Even when God gave his people the Law with its list of divinely ordained duties, people still said "NO!" The result of disobedience was death.

Notice Paul assumed a commonly held belief in the ancient world. Death was the ultimate evil and sin was the root cause of that evil. Evil was inescapable, to be sure, but the cause of evil was not fate or divine malevolence. The fault lie with people.

Also notice Paul's logic. Along with other ancient rabbis, he argued in dualistic terms. He separated his arguments into two camps: God and people, black and white, life and death, good and evil. In these verses, Paul separated God from evil by placing the blame

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on humanity's sin. But, he finishes his argument with another pairing: sin and grace. If sin caused death, what would grace achieve? If death was pervasive, how much greater would grace give life? This was the way Paul stated his rhetorical questions about God's gift.

One thing does lead to another. Yes, we sin, so, we will die. But, beyond death we will have an indescribable life. We will live with God, simply because of his freely given gift of grace.

*Q: How much greater is God in your life than evil, sin, and death? How do you experience his great power?*

## **Gospel: Fear and Worry**

*Q: What causes people worry about their security and their future?*

Worry, anxiety, fear. Americans seem to invite anxiety even in the best of times. Some people not only worry, they wallow in it. Fear becomes a lifestyle that demands some sort of therapy, some sort of drug, some sort of insurance. An atmosphere of extreme concern causes some to live indoors and in the shadows.

What can help people break out of fear, anxiety, and worry? A trust in something greater than themselves. When people lose themselves to fear, they realize they are not in control. They live in sheer chaos. When they realize that God is truly in control, and that all they need to do is to trust God, they can live without anxiety. They can live openly, in peace.

In Matthew's gospel, Jesus spoke to his front line, his Apostles, on fear and the need for faith.

Jesus discussed three sources of fear for the Christian: worry about self-revelation, fear of persecution, anxiety over personal need. None of these fears outweigh the responsibility of the Christian to spread the Good News.

26b was a proverb in the midst of commands. The proverb referred to daily existence in an extended family that lived in the same neighbor for generations. In such a tightly knit community, nothing could be covered up or kept a secret forever. Indeed, in the time of Jesus, adults trained children to freely walk into others' apartments and houses so they could spy, for no one locked their houses up during the day!

On the one hand, people distrust the stranger and those who dodge an issue. But, since people need privacy, they raised lies, deception, and counter-rumors to an art form. On the other hand, knowledge of others' business did have a social benefit. People can trust others who have nothing to hide.

Jesus instructed his Apostles to reveal all and to live a transparent life in order to gain the trust of people. Beyond the issue of trust, however, remained the issue of symbol. The Apostles proclaimed the ministry of the Messiah, the coming of the end times. At the final judgement, God would reveal all secrets and the saints would live in transparent glory. To convince an audience, the Apostles would need to present themselves as if they already lived such a transparent life in the Kingdom! [10:27]

*Q: How hard is it to live a transparent life, a life without secrets? What part of life is "nobody's business?"*

Such a transparent life would be honest, but it would leave the Apostles vulnerable. Living honestly cast an unfavorable shadow on those

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who have a secret to keep or something to hide. The dishonest could become jealous and soon rage against the honest. The dishonest would use guile, ill wit, rumor, and even persecution justify themselves against the honest. Yes, they could kill the body (both of the individual Apostles and the Christian community), but they could not kill the spirit.

Ultimately, the Christian should live as if the day of judgment had already arrived. They should live with everything uncovered before God, for God was the only thing that really mattered. Only he could condemn both body and soul.

*Q: Why do many Christians worry about what others think of them? How can you help them overcome such anxiety?*

In the time of Jesus, "sparrow" was a common term used for many different types of small birds, not necessarily a particular species. Town merchants sold small birds in marketplaces as one of the few meat sources for the poor. The coin (an "assarion") used to pay for two birds was Roman in origin.

Jesus used the analogy of size to emphasize God's providence. Everything in the world depended upon God's will. The flight of a small bird. And even something smaller, the hair on one's head. If he directed such things of small worth, how much more will God care for his people!

Three times, Jesus tells his audience not to worry (10:26, 28, 31) Don't worry to be open about faith, don't worry about powerful opponents, don't worry about one's fate. All three lay in God's hands.

*Q: How can you lay your personal daily needs before the Lord? How will such a daily offering help you?*

Faith could have a high cost: loss of privacy, persecution, and a loss of self-determination. But a single benefit outweighed the cost: an advocate before God. At the time of Jesus, when some prophets cried out for God's judgement and the end seemed immanent, people asked themselves "Where do I stand before God?" The Sadducees hid behind Temple cult. The Pharisees held to observance of the Law as justification. But, the Christian took comfort in the words "I belong to Jesus." Unlike worship ritual or religious duty, the Christian had a personal mediator, a go-between who could plead the case of the follower. Jesus would advocate for the faithful, but reject the apostate.

*Q: How can I freely share my Christian commitment with others?*

## ***Catechism Theme: Morality and the Passions (CCC 1763-1770)***

"Passions" are emotions that drive us to action or inaction when a moral dilemma faces us. Some passions like love focus on the good in life, while others like fear and hatred help us avert evil.

Passions are morally neutral; their morality depend upon their use. When we use they for a good end, we make them virtuous. When we use them for a evil end, we make them immoral. A feeling of love or ecstatic in itself does not make us good. In the same way, feelings of hatred or inadequacy does not make us evil or deficient.

We need passions a such as the will to accomplish the moral good. But most of all, we need the movement of Spirit who empowers us toward the good.

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*Q: Have you ever been challenged as a Christian? Have you ever felt God relieve you of worry or anxiety?*

Worry, anxiety, fear. These emotions result from perceived or real threats. Matthew's List your worries, rational or not. In your mind, place them before God. Pray for the

gospel presents an antidote, a way to live through these threats. Faith in God will lead us through discomfort, conflict, and persecutions. For God always remains faithful to us. Can we remain faithful to him?

strength to focus on the Lord through prayer, in spite of worry.

*Our mission is to invite and welcome all to praise and worship God and to bring this faith community into a closer relationship with Jesus Christ.*