

Jesus has predicted that the disciples will face difficulties in their mission. Many people will not receive them well, even within the land of Israel. Even family members will turn away from the disciples because of the disciples' commitment to Jesus and the kingdom. Today's Gospel offers the disciples consolation against this difficult truth.

In this Gospel passage, Jesus might be understood as putting suffering in perspective. The disciples of Jesus are called upon to keep their focus on God. Those who can harm the body do not have ultimate power; God does. Still persecution and suffering can not be avoided or prevented. But Jesus reassures his disciples that God knows and cares about what happens to his children.

We might not face the same type of persecution, but we do experience difficulties as we endeavour to live a Christian life. Sometimes we let the opinions of others prevent us from doing what we know to be right. We need the reminder that what God thinks about us is more important. We are reassured by the promise that God cares for us and protects us.

Lectio Divina with the Sunday Gospel

Lectio Divina means 'divine reading'. It is a way to pray using the holy scriptures in a step-by-step process. Gather the entire family around and make the sign of the Cross. Light a candle.

Leader: "Holy Spirit, you inspired the authors of Sacred Scripture to write what you wanted us to know for the sake of our salvation. Inspire us now to hear those words not only with our ears, but our hearts, so that we might know your saving Word for us today."

- Have one person **read** the scripture slowly, out loud and have a few moments of silence afterwards. (It may be helpful for everyone to have a copy of the reading).
- **Read** the scripture again out loud and choose a single word or short phrase that touches, speaks or surprises you. Share with everyone.
- **Read** the scripture out loud one more time and discuss what is happening directly in the text.
- **Meditate** on what God is doing now in our lives through this text.
- **Respond** to what God is doing through prayer.
- **Contemplate** on what God is asking of me through this text and how to use these words as a gift for others through my actions.
- After a period of silence, end with the Sign of the Cross.

(see over)

The Holy Gospel for June 25, 2023

A reading from the Holy Gospel according to Matthew.

Jesus said to his Apostles:

“Fear no one;

for nothing is covered up that will not be uncovered,
and nothing secret that will not become known.

What I say to you in the dark, tell in the light;
and what you hear whispered, proclaim from the housetops.

Do not fear those who kill the body
but cannot kill the soul;
rather fear him who can destroy both soul and body in hell.
Are not two sparrows sold for a penny?
Yet not one of them will fall to the ground
apart from your Father.

And even the hairs of your head are all counted.
So do not be afraid;
you are of more value than many sparrows.
Everyone therefore who acknowledges me before humans,
I also will acknowledge before my Father in heaven;
but whoever denies me before humans,
I also will deny before my Father in heaven.”

The Gospel of the Lord.

(see over)

Family Activities

- ❖ On a piece of paper, have each member of the family write down as many things about themselves as they can. Afterwards, reflect on that list. Did you know that God knows everything about you. He knows everything on your list. How does that make you feel?
- ❖ Reflect on what scares you. What helps you calm your fears? Jesus' disciples also feared what would happen when Jesus left them. Reflect on what kind of fears they would have had. Jesus tells us that we should not be afraid. God knows all of our fears because he knows us completely. But because we are beloved by God, he will ultimately protect us from our fears. If we persevere and remain faithful through difficult times, we will be rewarded.



Prayer

Blessed are You, Lord God, filled with love and a desire to be in relationship with us.

Through your goodness, you have invited us to be disciples of your Son, Jesus.

You promise to be with us now and for all eternity, if we stay in relationship with you and your Son.

Through Jesus and your prophets,

you warn us of both the benefits and challenges of being in relationship with you.

**We will face opposition from those who do not want to hear the truth
and the Good News of your loving care.**

You have given us your Holy Spirit to strengthen us, guides us, and take away all fear.

You promise blessings in this life and in the life to come.

With Jeremiah, we echo his song of praise,

knowing that you will take care of us even when people are against us.

We make this prayer in union with your Son, Jesus

who sets the example for us to follow,

for he is one with you and the Holy Spirit, our one God for ever and ever.

Amen