

## Fr Ryan homily 6/21/20

Read: Jeremiah 20:10-13(93A); Romans 5:12-15; Matthew 10:26-33

Well I have missed you all, welcome back. It's actually kinda nice to be in front of a congregation and not just the camera with a few ministers. So welcome back, it's good to be back. You know last Sunday at Corpus Christi we were able to celebrate 1<sup>st</sup> communion for those kids and their families which was wonderful. Last Tuesday night we had our 8<sup>th</sup> grade graduation over at St Joe's, which was a nice evening, and now this Sunday we're gonna celebrate Father's Day and we pray for God's blessing on our dad's. So, things are beginning to happen, signs of life, which are all good things. And now the first words that Jesus speaks to us in the Gospel today, as many here are back in church for the first time in three months, He says fear no one. Fear no one. Have no fear. Be not afraid. Remember that was the first thing that I said in my letter to the parish when all the craziness started to happen. Don't be afraid, repeating the words of John Paul II as well. You know, right now, there is no obligation to be here is there. Like if we're here it's because we wanna be here at mass, you don't have to be. You know, some might want to be here, watching online, but for one reason or another can't be. If you're here in church now it's because you wanna be here, not because of any obligation and I think that's awesome! Because without words, your presence being here is implicitly saying I need to be here. You know, three months is long enough, I need that food from Heaven, manna from Heaven. I need Jesus in the Holy Eucharist because we're hungering for Jesus. A hunger to feed on His most precious body, to be strengthened by it. And when we feed on the Eucharist, taking Jesus into ourselves in that way, a way that can only happen at mass, it gives us the strength we need to fear no one, to fear no thing. You know, if you're like me we've been sitting around these past few months watching these endless news cycles on tv. Headline after headline after headline. No matter what it's about, whether it's been about the virus or about the riots or about politics, whatever it is, I always, always come away from that stuff pulled down, not up, like always. And maybe you're like me in that because there is always such division. Everybody is at each other's throats; everybody wants their pound of flesh and you step back from what's pouring out of your television or your computer screens and you say wait a second. How is this in any way of God, what I see happening there, all the division. And then we hear Jesus speaking to us

from the Gospel again, do not be afraid, fear no one. So, let's take that to heart. Let's really take that to heart today because we are being given courage by receiving the Eucharist, we're strengthened by it, to live and to speak as saints and prophets in a world that is very divided. Not to wait it out, not to let somebody else take charge but to be that leaven in society because of our relationship with Christ. To say the thing that no one else has the courage to say and to do that thing that no one else has the strength to do. Not because we are so special but because the Holy Spirit is dwelling inside of us. And so, the question becomes for you and I, what are you afraid of most? Genuinely, what are you afraid of most? Because that's the question, whether we know it or not, that the rest of our lives takes shape around. What are you afraid of the most? I don't know if you're familiar with Jeremiah, we're hearing from the book of Jeremiah today in the first reading, in a story that's fascinating. Jeremiah was called to be a prophet by God at the ripe old age of 13 or 14, so he was just a kid. And the Lord says to this young Jeremiah in Chapter 1, before I formed you in the womb, I knew you. I'm going to send you as a prophet to the nations. And Jeremiah says, I'm just a kid, you can't send me, send somebody else, I'm too young. And God says don't say that you're too young, I've appointed you to do this, so you go. Okay, God has chosen Jeremiah to carry this message, and the message he's given is not an easy message. God tells Jeremiah to go to the leaders of his nation, including the king himself, with this message: you must surrender. Because Israel is fighting Babylon in this great war and what Israel wants to know from God is how do we fight; how do we win against them? And Jeremiah, the prophet, goes to them and says, thus says the Lord: surrender. I mean talk about a message that nobody wanted to hear. We talk sometimes about occasionally having to speak a truth that makes us unpopular, look at what God asked Jeremiah to do! And for the rest of the Book of Jeremiah, he is hounded, he is persecuted for that message. His patriotism, his personal virtue, everything about him is questioned. Why? Because God told him to deliver an unpopular message. And this is what we heard today, 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. And so, here is Jeremiah, a kid, hounded, persecuted by his former friends, conspiring against him looking for a reason to kill him. And I'm sure it frightened him; wouldn't you be in that situation? And if you fast forward to the end of the story, Jeremiah's fears were well founded, they were justified.

Jeremiah was taken out of the city of Jerusalem by his enemies and we never hear from him again. He either dies in exile or they kill him on the spot. But at the end of the day, who won? Who won? Jeremiah won. Why? Because he was faithful to God. And what's the end of that first reading, Jeremiah says: but the Lord is with me like a mighty champion. My persecutors will stumble, they will not triumph. So, was Jeremiah afraid of his enemies? Ya, I mean you can feel it when you read the text. But, did he let that fear control him and pull him away from God? NO! Because what was Jeremiah even more afraid of? More than any fear that the world could throw at him, Jeremiah was afraid of losing God, or more precisely of losing his friendship with God. Jeremiah was afraid of his enemies, but he was even more afraid of falling away from God, of being disobedient to God, of failing the task that the Lord had given him. He was more afraid of standing idly by, of keeping his God given message locked away more than anything else. And, that's what we call being a saint. When what you most are afraid of isn't losing your job or becoming unpopular, or even losing your health, or your family, or even your own life. When what you're most afraid of is losing friendship with God; that's a saint. Jesus amplifies it in the Gospel, fear no one! Fear no one! Don't let the fear of what any human being can do to you, don't let the fear of anything here below control your life. Jesus says don't be afraid of those who can kill the body but can not kill the soul. Rather be afraid of the one who can kill both body and soul in Gahaina. Well goodness just imagine if Christians across the board had the courage to live by that command, how the world would change. Don't be afraid of those in this world who can only harm the body, be afraid of losing friendship with the one who gave you life. Do be afraid, above all, of losing that friendship with God. So again, back to the question, what are you afraid of? And do we let those fears control us. Our decision making, our life because saints are those rare human beings who have rightly prioritized their fears. Does that make sense? Saints are the ones who have rightly prioritized their fears. Someone like, think of Karol Wojtyla, the future John Paul II, living through all the atrocities of WWII. Who in his inaugural address as Pope John Paul II, says to all the world do not be afraid, echoing the same words of Jesus. Mind you, he was someone who experienced firsthand some of the worst horrors of the twentieth century who you might imagine could feel justified in just tucking himself away and remaining silent. And yet he says to all the world don't be afraid. Where's that come from? Within him. Or think of another recently canonized saint, Teresa of Calcutta. This

little nun who can calmly walk into one of the worst cesspools in the world and give her life by caring for the poor and the sick and the dying. And because of that, that little nun would one day win the Nobel Peace Prize. And has the courage to stand at a national prayer breakfast in Washington and challenge the President, and the First Lady, and the government, to their faces, over the issue of abortion. Where does that courage come from, to stand there and do that? Well, it comes from living in Christ and being grounded in Him and nourished by this food from Heaven given from this altar in the Eucharist. Don't be afraid of those who can kill the body and do nothing else. Notice too, that neither of those two saints or Jeremiah or any great figure who has brought the world closer to God, who defended His truth, lived a serene life. If that's what we're looking for then I think sainthood is out of the question. Because it's not a life free of worry or threat or persecution, NO, they put themselves on the line, on the front line. What's the saying all that's needed for evil or chaos or stupidity to reign is for good men and women to do nothing. And so, today all I ask is that you chew on that for a while. Take all that we see going on in society, all of it, and this Gospel and what I've been talking about, the example of the saints, and chew on it. Pray with it this week. Friends, we become the Body of Christ, the church, by being nourished by the Body of Christ the Eucharist. Because the Eucharist is what enlivens us and gives us the courage to be the Body of Christ in the world and to fear no one. Not because they can't do anything to us but because no matter what they do they can't harm our souls, which belong to God. And so, we need to live the Eucharist once we receive the Eucharist. Again, welcome back to everyone, it's great to be with you for this Holy Sacrifice of the Mass where we will receive the Eucharist today. And in that, we will receive all we need to have courage to live as the saints were called to be.

Amen