



But we are not naïve, our lives of discipleship are not free from suffering. Following the generous and other-focused way of Jesus will bring its own crosses. No life is free of some pain and failure and disappointment and of encounters with evil, but Jesus reminds us all this can be faced with faith in the loving Father whose love never abandons us. In that love we can face the real world and take responsibility individually and communally, and with courage and creativity face the challenges that come our way.

MANY FEARS

Our country and our contemporary world have many fears, and recent politics has shown us that many feel insecure. People deal with this in different ways: some go out and shop, some look for semi-permanent entertainment and stimulus to help them dull the burden of reality, some become disillusioned and feel powerless, some look for strong leaders who will tell them what to do and a strong state to keep everything in control. But all of these are cop-outs.

Faith and hope are what help us to live with the fears that rise in all of us. But faith and hope are not based on our gifts and strengths, but on the one who lived and died for us and for all, the one who calls us into the circle of the divine love which we celebrate in every Mass. This, that we share today, is the circle of free divine life, of love and fellowship that he has promised to all who accept his offer.

Mass text

ENTRANCE ANTIPHON

The Lord is the strength of his people, a saving refuge for the one he has anointed. Save your people, Lord, and bless your heritage, and govern them for ever.

FIRST READING Jeremiah 20:10-13

PSALM Psalm 68

RESPONSE **In your great love, answer me, O God.**

1. It is for you that I suffer taunts, that shame covers my face, that I have become a stranger to my brothers, an alien to my own mother's sons. I burn with zeal for your house and taunts against you fall on me. **R.**
2. This is my prayer to you, my prayer for your favour. In your great love, answer me, O God, with your help that never fails: Lord, answer, for your love is kind; in your compassion, turn towards me. **R.**
3. The poor when they see it will be glad and God-seeking hearts will revive; for the Lord listens to the needy

and does not spurn his servants in their chains. Let the heavens and the earth give him praise, the sea and all its living creatures. **R.**

SECOND READING Romans 5:12-15

GOSPEL ACCLAMATION

**Alleluia, alleluia!
The Spirit of truth will be my witness;
and you too will be my witnesses.
Alleluia!**

GOSPEL Matthew 10:26-33

COMMUNION ANTIPHON

**I am the Good Shepherd,
and I lay down my life for my sheep, says
the Lord.**

Next Sunday's Readings:

Acts 12:1-11
2 Timothy 4:6-8. 17-18
Matthew 16:13-19

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DO NOT BE AFRAID

“Do not be afraid” is a theme of Jesus throughout the Gospels and especially in the post-resurrection appearances when he encounters very fearful people indeed: Mary in the garden, Peter on the beach at Lake Gennesaret, the couple of disciples on the way to Emmaus...

The disciples inevitably meet opposition in following Jesus, and he acknowledges this. They are to share the knowledge of his inner circle, the good news of God's revelation in Jesus, with the wider world. Christians have been doing this ever since across the centuries, in new contexts and cultures and languages.

But you can't pass on the good news in fear. Fear makes us insecure, untrusting, suspicious. Encounter with Jesus, then as now, inevitably heals and forgives. It lifts burdens and leads to an inner freedom in knowing him. Jesus reveals God as Abba, a loving parent who chooses to simply welcome back the prodigal and in doing so removes the fear of failure and rejection and opens up renewed confidence in the new living space that is the divine mercy; what Paul will call grace. Abba, like the God Moses encountered in the burning bush, cannot be limited by our sad little mistakes and concerns and fears. “I am who I am,” “I will be where I will be,” is a God we can't limit either by our ideas and concepts or our images. God thankfully breaks out of the limits of our fears and so opens up hope for us so that we might know love and joy. The community of discipleship is invited to live out of trust in the living God, to live lives beyond the inevitable fears that come our way or that well up within our subconscious.

But to do this we sometimes need to be shocked out of our accommodations. Our world demands we earn our keep, pay our way, are productive, but Jesus' life and teaching validates a different way of seeing things. We don't, we can't, earn God's love. It's given in our very existence, freely, and is never taken back. If we can come to accept this, and the way to do this is to fall in love with the life and teaching of Jesus where we see this writ large, then we become free to be what we are called to be, the fully alive sons and daughters of God.

Catching the kingdom



David McLoughlin is a teaching theologian who has spent nearly forty years helping to train Christian teachers, ministers and activists. Over the next few weeks he will be reflecting for *Sunday Bulletin* on the Sunday readings.



21 JUNE 2020

12TH SUNDAY
IN ORDINARY TIME

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DIVINE OFFICE WEEK IV