

# Father John's Gospel Reflection



## Gospel

**GOSPEL – SUNDAY, 25 JUNE, 2017**  
**- Twelfth Sunday in Ordinary Time** (Matt 10:26-33)

**Do not fear those who can kill the body.**

Jesus instructed the Twelve as follows: 'Do not be afraid. For everything that is now covered will be uncovered, and everything now hidden will be made clear. What I say to you in the dark, tell in the daylight; what you hear in whispers, proclaim from the house-tops.

'Do not be afraid of those who kill the body but cannot kill the soul; fear him rather who can destroy both body and soul in hell. Can you not buy two sparrows for a penny? And yet not one falls to the ground without your Father knowing. Why, every hair on your head has been counted. So, there is no need to be afraid; you are worth more than hundreds of sparrows.

'So, if anyone declares himself for me in the presence of men, I will declare myself for him in the presence of my Father in heaven. But the one who disowns me in the presence of men, I will disown in the presence of my Father in heaven.'

This is the Gospel of the Lord.

## Reflection

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Fear - from the moment we are born we learn to fear the world around us; we fear the stranger, we fear change, our political leaders exploit our fears.

Jesus recognised that the power of fear would cause a failure of discipleship. Jesus' disciples courageously leave the security and safety of their homes to follow Jesus and proclaim his message. This puts them on a collision course with the powers of this world. So, Jesus prepares them to overcome fear, and proclaim their mission "to the lost sheep of the house of Israel."

"Do not fear" is the recurrent message, but realistically Jesus lets his followers know that what befalls him is likely to be experienced by his disciples. Now the most powerful form of fear is death - but this is only a death of the body, not of the soul. God alone can destroy both soul and body (10:28); God alone therefore, is the only one we should fear.

The disciples are comforted, for God is not like the powers of this world - he is one who cares. Sure, the threat of violence, persecution and death are real concerns, but are no longer the determining force in their lives, for the one who has ultimate power over our lives can exercise that power with love and mercy.

Finally, "taking up the cross" implies identification with the marginal people (slaves and rebels) who were subject to Roman crucifixion, because they did not submit themselves to Rome's authority.

Our response to fear then is a clear-sighted recognition of the facade of human power, even with the threat of death, because the disciple has a deep awareness that in spite of the conflict and division the gospel inevitably produces, the disciple has a strong conviction that God is present in the world, in mercy, love and compassion.

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1. Let us recognise that our leaving the security of the familiar to follow Jesus, can lead us to fear the consequences.
2. Let us not be overcome by fear, for we know that in following Jesus, and with faith in him, we can overcome our fears.
3. A life for others, a life in imitation of Jesus, a life of love, mercy and compassion, can destroy our superficial fears.

## Take home Message