

THE FIRST READING IS FROM THE BOOK OF THE
PROPHET JEREMIAH

Jeremiah said: I hear many whispering.

Terror is on every side!

‘Denounce him! Let us denounce him!’

say all my close friends, watching for my fall.

‘Perhaps he will be deceived; then we can overcome him and take our revenge on him.’

But the LORD is with me as a dread warrior; therefore, my persecutors will stumble; they will not overcome me.

They will be greatly shamed, for they will not succeed.

Their eternal dishonour will never be forgotten.

O LORD of hosts, who tests the righteous, who sees the heart and the mind, let me see your vengeance upon them, for to you have I committed my cause.

THE WORD OF THE LORD

THE RESPONSE TO THE PSALM IS

In your great mercy, answer me, O Lord.

It is for you that I suffer taunts,
that shame has covered my face.

To my own kin I have become an outcast,
a stranger to the children of my mother.

Zeal for your house consumes me,
and taunts against you fall on me.

In your great mercy, answer me, O Lord.

But I pray to you, O LORD,

at an acceptable time.

In your great mercy, answer me, O God,

with your faithful salvation.

LORD, answer, for your mercy is kind;

in your great compassion, turn towards me.

In your great mercy, answer me, O Lord.

The poor when they see it will be glad,

and God-seeking hearts will revive;

for the LORD attends to the needy,

and does not spurn his own in their chains.

Let the heavens and the earth give him praise,

the seas and everything that moves in them.

In your great mercy, answer me, O Lord.

THE SECOND READING IS FROM THE LETTER OF ST
PAUL TO THE ROMANS

Brothers and Sisters: Just as sin came into the world through one man, and death through sin, and so death spread to all men because all sinned — for **sin** indeed was in the world before the law was given, but **sin** is not counted where there is no law. Yet death reigned from

Adam to Moses, even over those whose sinning was not like the transgression of Adam, who was a type of the one who was to come.

But the free gift is not like the trespass. For if many died through one man's trespass, much more have the grace of God and the free gift by the grace of that one man, Jesus Christ, abounded for many.

THE WORD OF THE LORD

THE GOSPEL ACCLAMATION.

Alleluia, alleluia.

The Spirit of truth will bear witness about me, says the Lord,
and you also will bear witness.

Alleluia.

A READING FROM THE HOLY GOSPEL ACCORDING
TO MATTHEW

At that time: Jesus instructed his Apostles: 'Have no fear of them, for nothing is covered that will not be revealed, or hidden that will not be known. What I tell you in the dark, say in the light, and what you hear whispered, proclaim on the housetops. And 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? And not one of them will fall to the ground apart from your Father knowing. But even the hairs of your head are all numbered. Fear not, therefore; you are of more value than many sparrows. So, everyone who acknowledges me before men, I also will acknowledge before my Father who is in heaven, but whoever denies me before men, I also will deny before my Father who is in heaven.'

REFLECTION ON THE READINGS

I can cope with illness and bodily diminishing, last year in July I had a macular spot on my left eye, causing me to stop driving and be aware that something was wrong. I was told this is a condition that affects the elderly, I had only been elderly for two weeks.

I think it is fair to say the greatest fear of being 70 was to become elderly, an old man not really needed and rarely wanted. It was not true – proven to me when I was expected to attend a “retirement café at the diocese when they both expected us to enjoy our opportunities and be active even when we had retired, which most of the healthy enough to get around are enjoying and they and keep us provided with accommodation and a pension.

Fear is the greatest enemy of faith. Our earthly lives are real and ever present, anxious concerns can keep us awake and be our first thought on awakening. Politicians will unscrupulously play on fears to get elected, in contrast Archbishop John wrote to us all to be welcoming to all races and people, copies are in the Narthex.

Overcoming fear was the most dramatic event in the life of the Apostles, after Pentecost they went to spread a new way of living based on God’s love for all people irrespective of race, colour or ability.

Pope John Paul II who survived Nazi and Soviet occupation stressed not being afraid, aware of the fear of persecution he endured. Martin Luther King said he did not fear any man, the day before he was shot. St Thomas More declared before his death, “I die the Kings good servant but God’s servant first. These people lived in our time or in our country and faced persecution without fear.

One Gift of the Holy Spirit is the fear of the Lord, a sincere respect of our creator and redeemer who wants us not to miss our opportunity, having given us the gift of courage overcoming in fear.

Our faith will develop as we try to find ways of expressing our belief to ourselves a development from a simple set of unthinking ideas to

an expression of faith that we can live with and demonstrate to others, guided by an awareness of the presence of the Holy Spirit, present since our Baptism, guiding us through our conscience to live our Christian life of belief, morals and in a holiness given to us.