

## **Fr Tom's Homily: 12<sup>th</sup> Sunday of Ordinary Time: The Fear of the Lord**

The theme of the readings of this Sunday is about the "Fear of God. This biblical concept about the Fear of God is often misunderstood. It does not mean that we should be afraid of God. It means that we should respect God, reverence God, and be more concerned with fulfilling the Law of God than with the way others might respond to us. In today's Gospel reading, Jesus says, "Do not let others frighten you." He tells us to get our priorities right. He tells us that we should not even be afraid of people who could kill us. "Do not fear those who deprive the body of life but cannot destroy the soul." In the gospel of Matthew, Jesus says, "Are not two sparrows sold for next to nothing? Yet not a single sparrow falls to the ground without your Father's consent. As for you, every hair of your head has been counted; so do not be afraid of anything. You are worth more than an entire flock of sparrows." The Lord also says in that passage, "Fear Him who can throw body and soul into Gehenna." This is not a popular concept in our society. We emphasize God's compassion and mercy, and this is good, but we tend to refuse to acknowledge His justice. In our own minds, we transform God into an imaginary figure that will not respond to our rejection of His life and laws. For example, a man commits adultery, leaves his wife and children, and then says, "God understands." Well maybe the God of his imagination might understand, but the real God was present when marriage vows were made to Him and to his wife. God sees the turmoil the selfish husband thrust upon a good wife and their beautiful children. God's mercy is always available, but if any of us refuse to acknowledge our sins and seek forgiveness, we are committing the deadly sin of presumption, and, in effect, belittling God to a creature of our imagination. But if we live with reverence and respect for the Lord, the biblical Fear of the Lord, if we do all we can to be God-fearing, then

we do not have to be afraid of anything. Will the corona virus destroy half the population of the world similar to how the Black Plague destroyed half the population of Europe? We certainly pray that it will not, but we also know that life or death; what matters is that we belong to the Lord. Will people attack us for being Christians? Absolutely. In fact, every day, there are many people in sections of Africa, Middle East and India that are being attacked for being a Christian. Will we be ridiculed because we are against abortion, against euthanasia? We certainly will be attacked for promoting the totality of respect life, but mocking does not matter as long as we are united with God. We have nothing to fear as long as we fear the Lord. The devil has three terrible lies with which he attacks us, sometimes directly, sometimes slightly. The first of the devil's lies is: You are not good enough. To that God answers, "I have made you good enough. I became one of you. I died for you; so I could raise you up with me to eternal life." The second lie of the devil is: You are alone. God assures, "I am with you always. I know you. I know every hair on your head. I know what you are going through. Together we can conquer all challenges, all fear." The third lie of the devil is one which all liars try to convince others of, that lie is simply: the other person is lying. In the case of the devil, his third great lie is that God has deceived us. He used this to great effect in the biblical story about first fall. The devil told Adam and Eve that God was deceiving them to keep them from being like God. In our modern times, some people question that there might be other ways to live than what is presented by the Church. To the accusation that God lies, God answers, "I am the Way, the Truth and the Life." "Fear the Lord and do not be afraid of anything," the Lord says. "You are worth more than many sparrows."