

Jer 20: 10-13
Ps 69:8-10, 14, 17, 33-35
Rom 5: 12-15
Matt 10: 26-33

John E. Deegan, O.S.A.
Director of Justice and Peace
Villanova Province

In today's reading from Matthew, we read, "Do not be afraid, you are worth more than many sparrows." I think that many of us become fearful in these days of war, violence and man's inhumanity to man. Often we are saddened by the reports of genocide, famine, and the trafficking of humans, in particular, the trafficking of innocent women and children.

Today's gospel gives us an image of hope. Jesus speaks of the sparrow which is a small insignificant bird that was common at the time of his preaching. Jesus tells us that not one of these small creatures falls from the sky without the care and concern of God. And then Jesus consoles us with the statement that we are worth more than many sparrows. Should we not trust and hope in such a caring and compassionate God?

Today's world is full of the tension between good and evil. Sometimes we can become depressed in hearing and reading of the supposed triumph of evil. Our newspapers scream headlines of murder, destruction and theft. We ask one another if there is no good news, if love and concern for the other has taken a holiday. Our frustration and confusion is understandable. But then, if God cares about the sparrow, surely God cares about us and our struggles to follow his commandment of love. We must trust that God is in our midst and that he, through the sacrifice of his son, allows us to place our fears and frustrations in his hands.

St. Paul, in today's reading from Romans 5, points out that Adam is the image of sinful humankind. Christ, on the other hand, is the image of redeemed humankind. The good news is that we, through our baptismal covenant with God, are heirs to this saving work of Jesus. We can not remain in our state of depression and frustration if we truly believe that we have been redeemed by Christ. The struggle within us and within the world between good and evil will remain. But through the saving work of Jesus, we are free to choose the good and reject the evil. We are free to let the Spirit into our lives and have trust in God to follow the Spirit wherever she will lead.

It is important to remember that for us Christians God is not a faraway deity. He is present in us, in our neighbors and in our faith community. A sensitive and caring God will not let the chaos of this world overwhelm us. We need to realize that the center of our lives is not "me" but God. We are the stewards of God's creation. God is the creator. No challenge can defeat us if we trust in God. Even death, which we all must endure, is not a defeat but a victorious passage to a new life.

The little sparrow, which we can hold in our hand, is cared for and tenderly loved by God. We who are made in God's image are surely loved by this compassionate and tender God who has proved his love for us by the death, resurrection and ascension of his

son. So, be not afraid. God is with us in all things. Let your hearts be calm, take his hand and walk in peace.