

# 12<sup>th</sup> SUNDAY IN ORDINARY TIME

## St. Matthew 10:26-33

One of the most important things to remember is that God desires a personal relationship with each one of us. You have probably heard that many times before but this Gospel reinforces the unrelenting demand God has to know us personally. That is why it should not be surprising that Our Lord can say whoever can, without shame, claim relationship with Him publicly He will claim relationship with before His Father in heaven, but whoever denies Him publicly He will deny before His Father. It is rather blunt and makes pale the image of Our Lord as someone who wants us just as we are. In the Gospel of St. Luke Our Lord says, “Whoever is not with me is against me, and whoever does not gather with me scatters” (*Lk.* 11:23), and in the book of the Apocalypse, “Because you are lukewarm, and neither cold nor hot, I am about to spit you out of my mouth” (*Rv.* 3:16). It is all very plain. We are either for or against Our Lord—there is no middle ground. But that is because there is no middle ground for God either. If there were, how could Our Lord say that His Father has numbered every hair of your head. What kind of love is that? What unrelenting, what devoted, what intimate love it is that Our Lord has for us. By the incarnation, God has attached Himself to us in a way unlike anything known before or since. God, in Christ, by sharing our life and death shares with us His resurrection and eternal life. We may have been born of our mother and father, but even the physical and spiritual bond we have with them is as nothing in comparison to the physical and spiritual unity that we have with Our Lord. But, as with the grace of the Sacraments that is freely given to any who ask, we must be ready and willing to co-operate with that grace. Like a jacket that is given to us as a gift when we are cold, we can choose to put it on or throw it to the back of the cupboard.

In the second reading, St. Paul says that the sin of Adam, in which we all share, is much less than the grace of God and the grace of Jesus Christ. That is why it is so important to make a claim for Christ, because if we don't, then we choose to hold on to Adam and to sin. It is one or the other—we can't have them both.

This past week the Church celebrated the memorial of St. John Fisher and St. Thomas More. St. Thomas More was the Lord Chancellor of England in the 16<sup>th</sup> century—effectively the highest ranking political minister in the country—and was beheaded by King Henry VIII because he refused to accept the King's claim that he, and not the Pope, was head of the Church in England.

Raymond Cardinal Burke said of St. Thomas More that he is a “sign to us” that the “Truth never changes... It doesn't matter how many people are in favour of a lie, it doesn't make it the Truth.” And almost 100 years ago, the famous writer G.K. Chesterton said of St. Thomas More that whilst he “is important today... he is not as important now as he will be in 100 years from today.” While we haven't quite reached the 100 years since then, that prophecy has already come true. We are facing a world which seeks to tear down the Church, to remove Christ not only from every public space but even from every private space. Whilst people go on complaining about this or that they forget that what we are truly facing is a new persecution of the Church and what is needed now is unity and bravery not division and cowardice.

It is not that the choice to stand firm in the Faith is easy. The prophet Jeremiah said in the first reading that there is terror on every side, “friends” pushing for his downfall (see *Jer.* 20:10). Making a claim for Christ is not so simple as claiming, as some street evangelists say, that “Jesus is my Lord and Saviour”. Of course we must make that profession, and we do it every time we pray the Mass or pray the Rosary, but it must find life in our prayers and deeds. And remember that what we often have to contend with is not so-called friends laying traps for us as they did for Jeremiah. What you and I have most to

contend with is diabolical apathy. How hard it is to proclaim Christ amidst the dead. That is why Christ says be hot or cold, because if we are luke-warm He shall vomit us out of His mouth (see *Rv. 3:16*). We must stand for the Faith, because if we don't, the Faith will fall.