

12th Sunday in Ordinary Time 2023 A

“Nothing is concealed that will not be revealed; nor secret that will not be known.” In the age of social media, that rings all too true, and perhaps these words prompt some anxiety about what is confidential or secret in our own lives.

But this Gospel is not about feeling threatened or insecure; it is about God’s protection and merciful presence when we need it. Notice what Jesus says immediately after: ***“What I say to you in the darkness, speak in the light; what you hear whispered, proclaim on the housetops.”***

That raises the question – what does Jesus say to those in darkness? What does the Good Shepherd whisper to the people He loves?

God’s relationship with each person is unique, individual, infinitely loving. So what the Lord says to each is a cherished treasure, words that each needs to hear and integrate into our lives. But from my own experience of prayer, and things others have told me, we can find some common encouragement from the whispers of Jesus in that still, quiet place in our souls even when the storms come upon us.

In the darkness, Jesus says things like these to console us: “I have loved you with an everlasting love, and you are mine.” “The storms will not consume you.” “Know that I am with you always.” “Do not be afraid.” “No one can take you out of my hand.” “Come to Me, and I will give you rest.”

Sometimes Jesus challenges us: “Oh you of little faith, why did you doubt?” “Repent, and believe in the Gospel.” “Go home to your family and tell them all the Lord in his mercy has done for you.”

Jesus may teach us, or remind us: “Whatever you do to the least, you do to Me.” “Whoever wishes to come after me must deny himself, take up his cross, and follow me.” “If anyone wishes to be first, he shall be the last of all and the servant of all.”

Often enough, in addition to our personal prayer, Christ chooses a human voice to communicate those words of hope, healing, encouragement, or challenge. That is the purpose of the Church, of course – to continue to lend our compassionate voices, our listening ears, and our serving hands to continue the work of the Incarnation with the help of the Holy Spirit.

And sometimes, Jesus teaches us even by silence – to slow down, to wait, to trust.

Today, think of the things God’s Word has spoken to you – whether in your own prayer or through another person – that have brought consolation, or a call to conversion and a new direction, or renewed strength and purpose, or just a sense of well-being, peace and rest. Faith and trust in God do not prevent adversity from visiting us, do not protect our loved ones from troubles, do not resolve the real and sometimes overwhelming problems of our relationships, our social fabric, the wars and tragedies that we see in every day’s news. Faith does not insulate us, but it does strengthen us to persevere, to help, to pray, to serve in ways we can.

When we reflect on what helps us, we also learn how to help others – so that what we hear from Jesus in the darkness, we can speak to help others find God’s light.