

12th Sunday, Cycle A, June 25, 2017

I have lived in Kansas all my life, except for when I have been away at school. Like many Kansans, I have never seen a tornado. However, I have experienced one.

It was early Monday morning, maybe 5 o'clock. I was still in bed. I was living at Savior of the World, which at the time was still operating as the minor seminary, where I had been teaching. But classes were over for the summer.

As I said before, it was early in the morning. I woke up to the sound of a train. Except, the closest railroad was miles and miles away. I jumped out of bed and ran out of my room, without stopping to put on any clothes. I ran down to the chapel. But once I got there, I looked up at the massive windows, and thought to myself, "This is stupid." Broken glass is one of the biggest dangers in a tornado.

So, I ran out once again, this time down to the stairwell to the underground passage leading to the garage. This underground passageway was supposedly very secure, even capable of serving as a bomb shelter. I thought that it would be the safest place to ride out the storm.

I waited. After a few moments, I started to hear, first a loud pop, then a crash, a pop, then a crash. This went on several times. The windows in the lobby upstairs were breaking out. Then, I heard the broken glass swirling down the stairwell. I prayed that it would not reach me. I prayed really hard. Next, at the other end of the passageway, at the door leading to the garage, it sounded as though someone was kicking at it, trying to break it down. It was the wind, pounding at it. The outside doors of the garage had opened up, allowing the wind to enter the garage.

Then, all of a sudden, it stopped. Everything was quiet. But I couldn't leave the passageway. Broken glass covered the floor at the bottom of the stairwell. And I wasn't wearing any shoes. Eventually, some of the other priests came by and carried me out. The windows in my room were also blown out, so it was a good thing that I had left. A tornado had sideswiped the seminary. It was not a direct hit. But it had done some damage.

While it was going on, I have to admit that I felt afraid. But Jesus tells us in the gospel reading: "Fear no one."

Do not fear storms and tornadoes, floods and earthquakes. They can leave everything in ruins. They can make a mess of your life. They can even take your life.

Take necessary precautions against them. Do your best to protect yourself from them, but do not fear them. Fear no one.

Do not fear terrorists, who can blow up the car that they are driving and everything in its path, but not touch your soul. Use caution and prudence, do not take unnecessary risks, but do not fear them. They wish to strike terror in your hearts. Fear is what they want. Do not give it to them.

Do not fear even physical disease that can eat away at your body, that can weaken you and make you depend upon others, that can strip away your dignity and deplete your financial savings. As much as it can harm you, it cannot touch what is most important, your love for others, your faith in God. As long as you keep those things safe, you have nothing to fear. So, fear no one.

We have nothing to fear, because God loves us. God loves us as sons and daughters. Think of your own children, how much you love them, how you would do anything for them. Well, God love us just as much, even more. All the hairs of your head are counted.

So, fear no one.