

When I was in 1st grade, my class took weekly field trips to some place for swimming lessons. I did not want to learn how to swim but didn't really have a choice. During this time, I was getting ready to have my tonsils and adenoids removed and tubes put into my ears. The week before my surgery, I told the swim teacher something about my surgery and that I didn't want to swim because of it but wanted to wait until after my surgery. And to my amazement, the teacher let me sit out. After surgery, I had a wonderful surprise because I was not allowed to swim.

One summer, my parents signed my sister and me up for swimming lessons. I remember liking to play in the water, but I had no interest in swimming. I guess that my swim instructors were getting tired of me because I did not want to swim and so they tossed me in the water and I of course panicked. After I was tossed in, they could not talk me into getting back into the water and I don't remember going back for any more lessons.

When we don't want to do something, we will do anything to get out of it. I had no desire to swim as a kid and did not learn to swim as a little kid because I seemed to find a way out of it. But today, I can swim even though I fought it so much when I was younger.

There are many things in life that tend to intimidate us and as a result, we can become a little hesitant about doing them. It doesn't matter if it is something as simple as learning to swim or more challenging such as something God wants us to do.

In our first reading, God had a job for Jeremiah but Jeremiah was not too excited about doing it. God appointed Jeremiah as prophet to the nations and understandably, he did not want to do it. Prophets were not always very popular because of the message God gave them to proclaim. Prophets were often rejected by the people because their message usually told the people how they were sinning against God.

When Jeremiah heard God's plan, he said, "Ah, Lord God! Truly I do not know how to speak, for I am only a boy." He did not have a lot of confidence in what God wanted him to do and so he was trying to make an excuse to get out of it. Instead of letting Jeremiah off the hook, God said, "Do not say I am only a boy; for you shall go to all to whom I send you, and you shall speak whatever I command you. Do not be afraid of them, for I am with you to deliver you."

God's words to Jeremiah were very important for Jeremiah because they gave him strength and comfort in his fear and insecurities. Jeremiah was afraid of being rejected and God promised to be with him at all times and to even tell him what needed to be said.

As a little kid, I refused to learn to swim because of my fear. I refused to even try and came up with all kinds of excuses because of my fear. As the years went by, I overcame that fear and can swim now, but do not remember when I learned.

We will have greater challenges throughout our lives than learning how to swim. In fact, the greatest challenge we will face is probably closer to Jeremiah's call. Like Jeremiah, God will use us to speak to the nations and just like with Jeremiah, God will tell us what to say.

As disciples of Christ, our main purpose is to proclaim God's love for all people. We are to talk about our own personal relationship with God and what that means for us. We are to give hope as we work to help those in need even if we cannot always fix the problem. In doing all of this, we do face the risk of rejection because not everyone will be open to hearing about God.

Even Jesus was rejected based on the words that he spoke. He upset people so much in today's reading that they wanted to kill him by throwing him off a cliff. And these weren't ordinary people because these people saw Jesus grow from a little boy. They knew Jesus as a boy and they knew Mary and Joseph and yet they wanted to kill him based solely on his words.

The people rejected what God wanted them to hear and they went after the messenger. The same thing could also happen to us which doesn't get anyone excited about being the messenger. But that doesn't change the fact that we are called to be that messenger; we are called to be God's disciple. The Holy Spirit is at work among us giving us guidance in what we do and words to speak so that what we say and do may be acceptable to God.

In all situations, it is God who gives us the words we need to speak. When we are afraid or rejected, it is God who is with us and will help us to overcome our fear and rejection. Proclaim your love for God in all that you do and do not worry about what others will say or do because you are glorifying God through your actions.