

Called to Love

I. A LOOK AT THE THREE READINGS

FIRST READING (Jer 1:4-5, 17-19)

⁴The word of the LORD came to **me**;/ ⁵Before I formed **you** in the womb I knew **you**;/ before **you** were born I dedicated **you**;/ a prophet to the nations I appointed **you**./ ¹⁷But **you**, prepare yourself;/ stand up and tell them/ all that I command **you**./ Do not be terrified on account of them,;/ or I will terrify **you** before them;/ ¹⁸For I am the one who today/ makes **you** a fortified city,/ A pillar of iron, a wall of bronze,;/ against the whole land:/ Against Judah's kings and princes, its priests and the people of the land./ ¹⁹They will fight against **you**, but not prevail over **you**;/ for I am with **you** to deliver **you**—oracle of the LORD.

THE FOCUS: The Prophet Jeremiah

COMMENTARY

- The Reading is about the vocation and mission of the prophet Jeremiah.
- V.4 is a typical formulation of God's word coming to a prophet. God addresses himself to Jeremiah in the second person (you).
- V.5 indicates God has predestined Jeremiah to be a prophet.
- Vv.17-19 express words of encouragement and success of Jeremiah's mission.
- Many opponents: kings, princes, priests and people (big shots and common *tao*).

REFLECTIONS

To be a prophet, one must be called by God. Prophetic work is not so much to predict the future, as to speak in behalf of God, to proclaim his message now, to warn people, especially leaders, political and religious, to change or else... (*The Israelites did not change, so they were exiled to Babylon.*)

To be a prophet is to become unpopular, because you speak what people do not want to



hear. But there is no backing out. In our baptism, we Christians share in the prophetic mission of Christ.

RESPONSORIAL PSALM

(Ps 71:1-2, 3-4, 5-6, 15-17)

I WILL SING OF YOUR SALVATION.

SECOND READING (1 Cor 12:31—13:13)

The best gift

³¹Strive eagerly for the greatest spiritual gifts. But I shall show you a still more excellent way.

What happens to my gifts if I have no love?

^{1*} ^aIf I speak in human and angelic tongues* but do not have **love**, I am a resounding gong or a clashing cymbal. ^{2b}And if I have the gift of prophecy and comprehend all mysteries and all knowledge; if I have all faith so as to move mountains but do not have **love**, I am nothing. ^{3c}If I give away everything I own, and if I hand my body over so that I may boast but do not have **love**, I gain nothing.

Love is ever enduring

^{4*} ^d**Love** is patient, **love** is kind. It is not jealous, [**love**] is not pompous, it is not inflated, ^{5e}it is not rude, it does not seek its own interests, it is not quick-tempered, it does not brood over injury, ⁶it does not rejoice over wrongdoing but rejoices

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with the truth. ⁷It bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, endures all things. ⁸**Love** never fails.

Other gifts are transitory

If there are prophecies, they will be brought to nothing; if tongues, they will cease; if knowledge, it will be brought to nothing. ⁹For we know partially and we prophesy partially, ¹⁰but when the perfect comes, the partial will pass away. ¹

Paul's testimony of his growth

¹¹When I was a child, I used to talk as a child, think as a child, reason as a child; when I became a man, I put aside childish things. ^{12g}At present we see indistinctly, as in a mirror, but then face to face. At present I know partially; then I shall know fully, as I am fully known.

Conclusion

^{13*} ^hSo faith, hope, **love** remain, these three; but the greatest of these is **love**.

THE FOCUS: Love

COMMENTARY

- The Reading reminds us of a very important ingredient in sharing our talents with others.
- V.31 introduces Paul's primary concern on being gifted by God.
- 13, vv.1-3 paint a picture of someone who is gifted but does not have love: gong, dashing cymbal (*pangit pakinggan*), nothing (*walang kuwenta*), nothing (*not meritorious, walang ganansiya, sayang*)
- Vv.4-8 enumerate the characteristics of love: patient, kind, not jealous (*sport lang*), not pretentious, not rude (*bastos*), respectful, other-centered, cool (*hindi mainit ang ulo*), does not blow small issues out of proportion, persevering, can take things even if they are difficult, etc.
- Vv.8-10 say prophecies and knowledge will come to nothing. They are not complete. These will disappear with the coming of the perfect one (God).
- Vv.11-12 talk about Paul's becoming mature. He has changed his outlook of life, not from the point of view of a small child, but a seasoned adult missionary.

- In v.13, once more, Paul affirms the importance of **LOVE**.

REFLECTIONS

Without love, our apostolates, preachings, prophecies, singing, healings, speaking in tongues, etc. become meaningless and waste, unmeritorious, unable to inspire, unable to build and to encourage.

GOSPEL READING (Lk 4:21-30)

Prophetic claim of Jesus and initial good reaction

²¹He said to them, "Today this scripture passage is fulfilled in your hearing."²²ⁿ And all spoke highly of him and were amazed at the gracious words that came from his mouth. They also asked, "Isn't this the son of Joseph?"

Jesus anticipates the demands of his townmates as a prophet, good preacher, (because they know him, they want him to work there)

²³He said to them, "Surely you will quote me this proverb, 'Physician, cure yourself,' and say, 'Do here in your native place the things that we heard were done in Capernaum.'"²⁴

Jesus states what is not acceptable to God

²⁴And he said, "Amen, I say to you, **no prophet is accepted** in his own native place.

Examples of acceptable Elijah and Elisha (who did not work in their own land during a crisis)

^{25*} ^oIndeed, I tell you, there were many widows in Israel in the days of **Elijah** when the sky was closed for three and a half years and a severe famine spread over the entire land. ^{26*} ^pIt was to none of these that **Elijah** was sent, but only to a widow in Zarephath in the land of Sidon. ^{27a} Again, there were many lepers in Israel during the time of **Elisha the prophet**; yet not one of them was cleansed, but only Naaman the Syrian."

His townmates could not swallow his argument (Jesus did not give in to their expectations)

²⁸When the people in the synagogue heard this, they were all filled with fury. ²⁹They rose up, drove him out of the town, and led him to the brow of the hill on which their town had been

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built, to hurl him down headlong.

Not a escape, but standing by his belief as prophet (in order to be acceptable to God)

³⁰But he passed through the midst of them and went away.

REFLECTIONS

Jesus' mission as a prophet is misunderstood by his town mates. The prophet must be programmed according to God's plan, not according to that of the *kamag-anak*, relatives or loved ones. He/she must be focused on where God wants to send.

III. TYING THE THREE READINGS TO DEVELOP YOUR SHARING/HOMILY

The First Reading talks about the prophet Jeremiah, his call and mission. The Second Reading talks basically about love but we focus on prophecy but in the context of love. The Gospel Reading talks about Jesus as acceptable prophet.

How to develop your homily

Begin by relating your story why you are not assigned in your own home town. What are the reasons of your bishop or superior?

What is to be a prophet? Please clarify through the Readings:

- Called by God, to be bold to face all kinds of people, to carry God's message, to represent God (First Reading);

- To be a useful, meaningful prophet, one must have love (Second Reading);

- To be acceptable prophet, one must go out of his comfort zone and go somewhere where the Spirit leads (Gospel).

In our times characterized by deceit, cheating, corruption, bad administration (just to get money and power), we need prophets to face the bureaucracy, proponents of war and terrorism, complacent civilians in all institutions of our Filipino society: government, church, media, etc.

We challenge our parishioners working in government/non-gov't offices to be prophets (to represent God) in their own workplaces, to be critical to policies that do not favor the poor and

sell products that destroy the environment. They should not be used by their employers to oppress others and do corruption.

Today the prophet may be an activist, an NGO in the streets crying out for justice, fairness, charity, respect for the Indigenous Peoples, land for the landless, peace and dialogue, work for the unemployed, love for the loveless.

The prophets of today may be the bishops, the oppositionists, the theologians, the ordinary parishioners, the social workers, conscientious soldiers, the catechists who are passionate in their struggles for social justice, just society and clean environment.

The prophets are those who are bold enough to pinpoint there is something wrong with our office, our family, our parish, our society, our government, and world order. They believe something better can be done.

All these prophets can do better in their ministry if they are detached from their families and loved ones. It is hard to prophesy in your own town. Attachment to money, power, relatives spoils the work of prophecy.

These prophets must have love and passion for people and for the country (*bayan*). Without love and God, we become false prophets.

What happens if we do not have prophets of our times? Status quo. We become worse. We surrender to evil. Evil will proliferate. No one will repent of one's evil-doing. No justice and peace.

What happens if we do not listen to the voice of God? Hard to redeem. The kingdom of God is not advanced. We do injustice to ourselves as Christians.

In the eucharist, we ask that we become acceptable prophets of our times. Amen.

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III. OUR CONTEXT

1. Today is Pro-Life Sunday
2. What is it to be a prophet in your own parish or community? (HM)