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Fourth Sunday in Ordinary Time - Year C

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Fourth Sunday in Ordinary Time - year C

by Sr. Chinh Nguyen

ABSTRACT:

This is a homily for the Fourth Sunday in Ordinary Time – year C. Speaking God's truth hurts, but love prevails. Being a prophet is difficult, but love never fails.

SYNOD:

As Christians, we are called by Pope Francis to participate in the synod, to listen to one another, and to find out what the Church should do or should not do. In other words, we join synod as prophets to find, to listen, and to speak the truth. We need to remember that Speaking God's truth hurts, but love prevails.



Reading 1: **Jer 1:4-5, 17-19**

Reading 2: **1 Cor 12:31—13:13**

Gospel: **Lk 4:21-30**

Have you ever heard the saying that “Nothing hurts like the truth”? We hear people use this saying a lot in their daily life. This saying is not only alive in our time but also reflected back to Jeremiah and Jesus’s time.

In the first reading today, we hear about the vocation and the role of the prophet Jeremiah. He was appointed by God as a prophet before he was born. “Before you were born, I knew you I love you and dedicated you, a prophet to the nations.” (Jeremiah 1:5)

God appointed Jeremiah as prophet for what? For delivering God’s message, God’s Word to His people. God’s message, God’s Word is “the truth and the life.” Telling the truth or delivering God’s word is not easy for both the speaker and the listener. We can see that in the experience of Jeremiah who is called the weeping prophet.

The book of Jeremiah tells us that there are more than once, Jeremiah was tempted to hang up his prophet’s hat and go home. Jeremiah wanted to stop delivering God’s message because his people rejected him; rejected what God wanted him to tell his people that they are doing the wrong things. He was asking them to turn back to God, to turn back to the path of life. Yet, the people did not listen to him and try to kill him. Because of that sometimes Jeremiah cried out in a prayer. Even he wishes he was not born or died at birth, “I wish I had never been born! I have become a source of conflict and dissension in my own country”. (Jeremiah 15:10) We can see how hard the work of the prophet who is telling the truth. The prophet is discourage, and the listener does not want to hear.

We see the same thing happening to Jesus during His mission as the prophet. The Gospel today tells us that Jesus is back in His hometown. What was he doing there? At first, people welcome Jesus and feel amazed about him. But when Jesus tells the truth about the people, He points to past Hebrew generations that doubted the scriptures and the prophets. And guess what? They got up, drove him out of the town, and took him to the brow of the hill on which the town was built, in order to throw him off the cliff. They tried to kill Jesus. He was rejected by his own people.

More than that, the rejection of people seem overwhelming for Jesus. Before his passion, Jesus entered the garden and prayed and his sweat was like drops of blood falling to the ground, “Father, if you are willing, take this cup from me; yet not my will, but yours be done.” (Luke 22:44)

Jeremiah runs away from God, hides from God, and wishes he had not been born so that he did not have to preach the Word of God. Jesus prayed to God, “Father take this cup from me.” After feeling so scared, so overwhelming both Jesus and Jeremiah were still faithful to their mission as prophet to love their people. It is the love that we hear St. Paul mentions in second reading today, “Love is patient, love is kind, Love never fails. bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, endures all things.” (1 Corinthians 13 4-8) Because of the love of their people, they were willing to suffer even to lose their lives.

We are Dominican Sisters; we are preachers of God’s Word. We wonder how the example of Jesus and Jeremiah as prophets affect our daily life as preachers. We all are aware that we preach not only by word, but also by actions and by living. We always need to say the truth in love. St Paul remind us that if we have the gift of prophecy and comprehend all mysteries and all knowledge; if we have all faith so as to move mountains, but do not have love, we are nothing. Looking at the life of Jesus and Jeremiah, we know that saying the truth with love may cost us our life. I think all of you may remember at the beginning of covid, the Chinese doctor named Liwenliang who tried to warn others about the danger of Covid and he was put to death by the authorities.

All the points, I just mention above, we can see that living the role of prophet is not easy. Telling the word of God – the truth is hard for both speaker and listeners. Looking at the example of Jesus, Jeremiah, and Chinese Doctor, we are aware that we need to tell the truth with heart and integrity. Even it may cost our life. Love never fails. bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, endures all things.

