

Resources for Homily 4th in O.T. C Sunday, February 3, 2019
Readings: Jeremiah 1:4-5, 17-19; 1 Corinthians 12:31--13:13; Luke 4:21-30.
Prophecy in the life of the disciple.

1. Introduction: The central theme of today's readings is that of prophecy. Prophets are sent by God to form the people in the hope of salvation. This has a great deal to do with formation of conscience for righteous living. We should welcome the gift of prophecy in our midst and heed it instead of rejecting, killing or ignoring the prophet and his message. This prophetic message is essential to the formation of our consciences and hence to a stable and civilized society. Let us remember that all the baptized are called in their own way to the three functions or works of Jesus: prophet, priest, and king.

2. Summary of beginnings of discipleship in Ordinary Time:

1st O.T. – The Baptism of Jesus – The identity of Jesus as the beloved Son of God.

2nd O.T. – The Wedding at Cana – The reality of miracles and evidence for the supernatural.

3rd O.T. – Importance of the Word of God – Nehemiah, St Paul, and Jesus. Jesus's identity as Messiah.

4th O.T. – Importance of Prophecy and the profound value of a Catholic education.

3. Theological definition of Prophecy: The function of "prophet" is one of the three basic functions of Christ and it has to do with teaching. (See CCC 888ff. and Canon Law, §§747,749). When we are incorporated into Christ through Baptism, and thereby constituted as part of the People of God, we become sharers in Christ's priestly, prophetic, and royal (kingly) offices. The "prophetic office" has to do with teaching. The Bishops are to lead the People of God in teaching all matters of faith and morals. The teaching office has to do with instruction in the truths of the faith as well as a description of the consequences of obedience or disobedience of these truths.

Scripture lessons:

4. The first reading tells us how God called Jeremiah as His prophet and equipped him to face opposition and rejection. In his prophetic vocation, which he lived out while encountering rejection and persecution, Jeremiah prefigured Jesus, the greatest of all prophets. He was to call the leaders of Judah to faithfulness.

5. In the second reading, we hear Paul speaking with the courage of his convictions in correcting the Corinthian Christian community. Fraternal correction is of the essence of the prophetic ministry. In Corinth the exercise of the spiritual gifts was causing competition, jealousy and divisiveness. St Paul guided them to a "way" which surpasses all others, namely, the *way of love* and instructs them to exercise all their gifts with love.

Note the positive ways in which we are to "love" one another, not in feelings but in actions: "Love is patient, love is kind. It is not jealous, it is not pompous, it is not inflated, it is not rude, it does not seek its own interest, it is not quick-tempered, it does not brood over injury, it does not rejoice over wrongdoing but rejoices with the truth. It bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, endures all things" (vv 4-7).

Remember that St. Thomas Aquinas defined love as "wanting the good for the other person" and if possible helping to obtain that good.

6. Today's Gospel is a continuation of last Sunday's gospel presenting Jesus at the synagogue of Nazareth, his home town. At the end of it he also identified himself as the Messiah. The passage shows us how Jesus faced skepticism and criticism with prophetic courage. Jeremiah, Paul and Jesus believed that they were commissioned by God to proclaim a disturbing prophetic message. No matter how strong the opposition, all three had the conviction that God was with them.

7. Background: Why was the people's reaction so strong against Jesus?

In today's reading Jesus is perceived by others in his village to be arrogantly claiming something blasphemous. The people in Nazareth, Jesus' hometown (1:26; 2:4, 39, 51; Acts 10:38), knew him and his family very well. Luke records their amazement. "Is not this Joseph's son?" And he is not insulting our faith and suggesting that we are less faithful than Gentiles? Jesus inserts himself into the prophetic

line of Elijah and Elisha. Like these prophets, he ministers not only to fellow Mediterranean Judeans but also to Gentiles, non-Judeans, people not of his own kind. To claim to be a prophet with the involved criticism was very offensive. It is small wonder that these townspeople became filled with rage and wanted to kill him.

8. Note that all three persons, Jeremiah, St Paul and Jesus himself, were called to be prophets, to announce the truth, to correct people who held erroneous beliefs and to guide them in righteous behavior. Is this prophetic calling always welcomed or desired?

9. The relevance of this message to us today, especially in the growth of malignant evil. Three years ago I was reflecting on the book, *The Sociopaths among us* by Martha Stout, Ph.D. (Psychiatrist). She argues that “about one in twenty-five individuals are sociopathic, meaning essentially, that they do not have a conscience. It is not that this group fails to grasp the difference between good and bad; it is that the distinction fails to limit their behavior... Without the slightest blip of guilt or remorse, *one in twenty-five people can do anything at all.*” She describes graphically the consequences of this. It especially explains the explosion of shootings and violence in our culture.

10. Expansion of abortion rights. Today, more immediate to us is the aggressive attempt to expand the right to abortion at the state level to murder babies, both born and unborn. The pro-abortion law passed in New York, but also proposed in Virginia, Rhode Island and even here in Texas, is incredibly evil. Here is Bishop Strickland’s judgment on it and the New York State Legislature’s attitude on its passage.

The video of the “celebration” of New York legislators as they condemned even full term unborn children to Death by Choice is a scene from Hell. Woe to those who ignore the sanctity of life, they reap the whirlwind of Hell. Stand against this holocaust in every way you can. 2:29 AM - 25 Jan 2019

11. Challenge: How can we know clearly the will of God in such a way so as to have firm belief and practice? Example of Dr. Stacy Trasankos as a mother of four (now seven) plus five miscarriages as she had to do battle with erroneous Catholic doctors in failing Catholic hospitals in the northeast. They constantly harassed her to use immoral contraceptive methods and even to be sterilized (mutilated) in order not to have more children.

12. What might have been the consequences if we in the West had listened to the Church concerning contraception and abortion? Note here. I calculate that the births we would have had without contraception since 1968 and legal abortion nationally since 1973 would give us a population of over 700M instead of our current 330M. Today the West is a dying culture being occupied and taken over by foreigners instead of leading the world in Christian values and morals.

13. How difficult to know when a source of teaching is true? We need knowledge of the author and of his truth. Example of cell phone hacking. When Pat Adams received the attempt to deceive and obtain money through the scam, he immediately knew it was false. First, it was the wrong phone number. Secondly, he thought, “Father Paul never does and would never do something like this.” So he texted back, “Scam.” Then he called me to let me know what was going on. And then he called Tracy to put out a notice by text warning everyone about the scam. Later I learned that many of your responded the same way. Father Paul doesn’t do things that way! False.

14. Hence, we see in relation to our faith, we need to know Jesus and the values of our faith. Then, like Dr. Trasankos, we can identify those who are false, even if labeled “Catholic authorities” and seek out the truth. Let us invest time in knowing well our faith! You and I need to have a rightly formed conscience and to be trained to make prudent decisions (see Heb 5:11-14). I am convinced that we must work hard to be trained in God’s Word, in the Doctrine of the Church, and to be able to make critical, prudent judgments. We also need to collect around us a group of competent, capable friends that we can trust.