

4th Ordinary Sunday
January 31, 2021
“Prophetic Voices”

Dt 18:15-20
1 Cor 7:32-35
Mk 1:21-28

My Brothers and Sisters in the Lord –

Most people have difficulty in taking advice. Even when we seek advice, it can be very hard to put it into practice. Over the years we develop patterns of behavior that are ingrained and difficult to change. We have attitudes, presumptions, biases – and even prejudices – that have been inherited from previous generations. Thus, stopping something we have been doing – or starting something we have never done – can be a daunting proposition.

Rather than taking advice or correction, we would rather denigrate the one who is trying to help us. Yet, what we forget, is that often it is God who is using another to give us the advice – Because God wants us to be more than we presently are. God hopes to make us worthy of eternal life with Him!

In the Old Testament, God spoke directly to those He called for a special task. God called Abraham directly, and then Moses, hundreds of years later. However, at Sinai the Chosen People began to fear the manifestation of God in the smoke, the fire, the rumbling of the mountain. So they asked for a less awesome presence of God – for someone to speak as an intermediary for God.

Consequently, today, God tells them that in the future, He would speak through His chosen representatives – the prophets. There would be others, after Moses, to guide and correct the Chosen People. But woe to those who did not heed the prophets – And woe to the prophet who misrepresented God – or who spoke on behalf of another, false god!

Ultimately, God sent the greatest prophet of all in Jesus, His incarnate Son. Jesus came to correct us and guide us. Although St. Mark tells us that Jesus spoke with authority, Jesus is a manifestation of God that we did not need to fear. Jesus made God approachable. Jesus spoke to us in person and continues to speak to us in his Gospel and through his gift of the Holy Spirit.

With Jesus, we have nothing to fear because he revealed a God of understanding, compassion, mercy, and forgiveness! With Jesus, we have nothing to fear because he revealed a God of love!

However, unfortunately, we continue to resist advice and correction. Satan continues to wreak his havoc in our world, and he attempts to influence our hearts and lives. Satan does this subtly and usually not with demonic possession as in St. Mark's Gospel. Temptation is the trap that Satan uses to ensnare us – and sin is our bondage in the grip of that prince of darkness! Consequently, we can understand how important it is to break those bonds and resist temptation which can come in so many different forms.

In the New Testament reading, St. Paul gives us good advice on how to avoid some of the pitfalls in our quest to be faithful disciples and to do God's will. One of the traps we can fall into as clergy, religious, or single people dedicated to God is to become anxious. We can be so anxious about becoming perfect and doing religious things perfectly, that we forget Jesus himself and God whom we are serving. We must always stay oriented toward God – but we must do so in a relaxed, attentive, and loving way.

Likewise, the majority of people, ie. those who are married, should not become so anxious about and focused upon their spouse that they lose perspective and forget God! If God is always primary in their hearts, then they will always behave in the most loving way toward their spouse. The Holy Spirit will guide them in all that they do and will correct them when they are on the wrong track.

Brothers and Sisters, all of us have individual lives to live while we are on the proving grounds of this Earth. God always sends other people to help us on our journey. They become prophetic when they speak to us on behalf of God. And we become prophetic, ourselves, when we help others and guide them toward good and better things.

So, let us pray, today, that we always walk as disciples of Jesus – May we also be attuned to the Holy Spirit who, prophetically, speaks to us from within and through those He sends to us!

Amen.

January 31, 2021

Msgr. Russell G. Terra