

14th Ordinary Sunday
July 4, 2021
“The Voice of God”

Ez 2:2-5
2 Cor 12:7-10
Mk 6:1-6

My Brothers and Sisters in the Lord –

We all make mistakes. We all make bad decisions during the course of our life. Some mistakes cost us little in terms of physical health, time, or money. Others can be life-changing – they shatter dreams and eliminate opportunities for the future. All of us have done something wrong that, later, we regret. Likewise, we have failed to do something that we now know we should have done.

Sometimes our wrong choice or decision comes after we have been cautioned or warned by someone else. At other times, we go against an inner feeling or intuition that we disregard as nonsense. Sometimes we discount what is the right thing to do or avoid with seemingly logical arguments in our own favor. This is called rationalization. There are even those situations wherein we discount the sound advice of another, because they are flawed themselves. Nevertheless, in any case, our failure to act in the truly right way is because we are selfish! Fortunately, the scriptures for today have much to teach us regarding this topic.

Ezekiel was a prophet who was exiled in the first group who were taken to Babylon. However, he continued to warn those who remained in Jerusalem and in the Promised Land that they must change. They would have to change or face an even greater retribution and punishment.

Ezekiel reminded them that they had failed before God in every possible way in the past. It was time to change morally, socially, politically, and spiritually. But they did not. They failed to heed his warnings. Their personal selfishness overrode the voice of God. The result was that they were conquered and exiled – with their city and Temple reduced to rubble.

In the Gospel selection, Jesus is the Word of God who speaks to the Chosen People as the human Voice of God. However, when he came to his hometown of Nazareth, he was resisted and rejected, for the most part. “How can this Jesus be everything that we have heard about him? Who does he think he is, anyway? He’s no better than the rest of us! We know his family and relatives – and they are nothing special!”

Sadly, St. Mark tells us that Jesus could do very little for the people of Nazareth because of their lack of faith. They had closed their minds and hardened their hearts. Somehow they saw flaws in Jesus when there were absolutely none at all!

St. Paul saw himself as a flawed disciple and apostle. Formerly, he had persecuted Jesus in those members of the Christian community whom he had arrested. But Paul had changed after his extraordinary experience with Jesus on the road to Damascus. Paul enjoyed many successes and had spread the Gospel of Jesus far and wide. Yet, today, he tells us that he had a very difficult time with whatever was causing him to suffer. Paul doesn't say whether it was physical pain, spiritual suffering, or political resistance. But it was there, nevertheless – and God refused to eliminate it.

Instead, God told Paul that he could count on God's grace – God's divine power was greater than any human weakness! This was a reminder that Paul needed to rely on God for everything!

Brothers and Sisters, the Voice of God comes to us in many different ways. It is in our friends who, unselfishly, give us good advice – But it can even be in our enemies. It is in those modern prophets who warn us about our part in climate change – and the misuse or abuse of natural resources. It is in those who challenge the political, economic, social, cultural, and moral failure of our nation and the world. It is in the Church, in the People of God, in the leadership and the faithful – who, joined together, are guided by the Holy Spirit.

However, closest of all, the Voice of God is our conscience. The Voice of God is the Prophet of our Conscience that warns us away from mistakes – and chides us when we have done wrong. To stifle that Voice is to close our minds and harden our hearts to God and His truth!

There is an old Native American teaching that says:

“Conscience is a little three-cornered thing in my heart.

It spins when I do wrong.

However, if I don't listen to it, the edges become dulled –

And, soon, I don't feel it anymore!”

That “three-cornered thing” is a triangle – an ancient symbol for God. Let us pray, today, that we always hear and heed that Voice of God, however and whenever it comes!

Amen.

July 4, 2021

Msgr. Russell G. Terra