

Homily of Fourteenth Sunday in Ordinary Time, Year B, 2024

Ezekiel 2:2-5; Psalm 123:1-4; 2 Corinthians 12:7-10; Mark 6:1-6

Ezekiel was one of the prophets whom God called and sent to prophecy to the people of Israel. The Israelites were rebellious to God and consequently were carried off to exile by the Babylonians. Ezekiel was among the captives. Even while in exile, they remained "hard of face and obstinate of heart." Yet, God did not abandon them. He never left them without his prophets. In the same way, God has not abandoned our rebellious world and all of us without prophets.

Unfortunately, all over the world, many of God's prophets are persecuted rather than listened to. There are countless examples of true prophets who are either silenced or killed. Persecutors of the messengers of God close their ears to truths and open their ears only to lies and whatever they like to hear. Instead, false prophets are glorified because they 'prophecy' whatever pleases their 'base,' their masters, their admirers, their followers, and their listeners. In the gospel reading, Jesus was amazed at the lack of faith of the people of his time. The blatant rejection of truth and messengers of truth by many people and their acceptance of and preference for falsehood and lies of our generation are, indeed, amazing.

St. Paul's mystical experience narrated in the second reading encourages all God's messengers not to be discouraged in the face of oppositions and persecutions. God's assurance is, "My grace is sufficient for you, for my power is made perfect in weaknesses." The reading encourages God's messengers to be calm and strong in times of weaknesses, insults, hardships, persecutions, and constraints.

In the gospel reading, Jesus was a prophet among his own people, but they rejected him. "They sneered at him, 'Where did this man get all this? What kind of wisdom has been given him? What mighty deeds are wrought by his hands! Is he not the carpenter, the son of Mary, and the brother of James and Joses and Judas and Simon? And are not his sisters here with us?' And they took offense at him."

God did not go to a foreign land to get a prophet for his people in exile. He called Ezekiel from among the Israelite exiles to prophecy to them. Ezekiel's people did not listen to him. I guess they would have said to him, "Keep quiet, young man. Where did you get all this? We know when you were born; and we know your parents and relatives who are here with us."

Do we recognize and listen to God's messengers in our midst, or do we sneer at them and persecute them?

The interchange between Abraham and the rich man comes to mind: "[The rich man] said, 'Then I beg you, father, send him to my father's house, for I have five brothers, so that he may warn them, lest they too come to this place of torment.' But Abraham replied, 'They have Moses and the prophets. Let them listen to them.' He said, 'Oh no, father Abraham, but if someone from the dead goes to them, they will repent.' Then

Abraham said, 'If they will not listen to Moses and the prophets, neither will they be persuaded if someone should rise from the dead'" (Luke 16:27-31). Most times, God sends his messages through someone among us. Let us listen to the person and not dismiss or persecute the person.

Some people spend so much time, money, and energy, running up and down and seeking for miracle workers, fortune tellers, diviners, dream analysts, palm readers, psychics, spiritualists, and so on to 'prophecy' to them. Meanwhile, these same people neglect God's words in the Bible. They neglect Sunday sermons from their church leaders, good advice from parents, relatives, friends, colleagues, teachers, and so on.

God sends us to be prophets to one another. Let us speak the truth to one another. Let us listen to one another. Jesus says, "I say to you, whoever receives the one I sent receives me, and whoever receives me receives the one who sent me" (John 13:20).

You may be the 'Ezekiel,' or the 'Paul,' or the 'Jesus' God has sent to 'prophecy' the truth to someone or about a situation. You are encouraged to pray and proceed without further delay. It is not by your power, but by the power of the One who sent you! Let God's grace be sufficient for you. St. Paul says, "proclaim the word; be persistent whether it is convenient or inconvenient" (2 Timothy 4:2).

We conclude with Moses' prayer in Numbers 11:29, "Would that all the Lord's people were prophets and the Lord would put his Spirit upon them all." Amen.

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