
Sunday, January 28, 2018 – Fourth Sunday of Ordinary Time

Deuteronomy 18:15-20 | Psalm 95:1-2, 6-7, 7-9 | 1 Corinthians 7:32-35 | Mark 1:21-28

GLANCING THOUGHTS

In the Gospel Reading, Jesus heals a man who was possessed. But notice that when the demon-possessed man first talks to Jesus, he uses the first-person plural pronoun to refer to himself. He says, “What have you to do with us, Jesus of Nazareth? Have you come to destroy us?”

Why does he say ‘us’? Why doesn’t he say ‘me’?

The answer, I think, is that although there is only one human body giving voice to these words, there is more than one mind behind the words. That is why that one man’s voice says ‘us’ to refer to himself.

When Jesus heals the man, he does so by ridding him of all minds but one, the man’s own. In healing him, Jesus makes him single-minded. And so the Gospel Reading calls to our attention what an affliction it is to be double-minded.

Even just dealing with the double-mindedness of long bad habit can be miserable and devilishly difficult. Someone says to you when you are trying to diet and not doing particularly well, “Do you want another helping of pasta?” And what is the answer? Do you want more

pasta? You do, you know you do, don’t you? And yet somehow you really don’t either.

And so, as we know from our own painful experience, being double-minded is a kind of slavery to our worst selves.

Real freedom is being able to do what you want to do. But if you have two minds about something, which mind is the real you? How can there be one real you when you are in two minds about something?

That’s why you aren’t free when you are double-minded. No matter what you do, you aren’t doing what you want to do because there isn’t just one you.

Like the demon-possessed man in the Gospel Reading, you will be free only when you are single-minded. But the demon-possessed man in the Gospel Reading was single-minded only after Jesus had healed him.

And so here is the lesson for us. In another Gospel text (John 8:32), Jesus tells his disciples that they will know the truth, and the truth will make them free. For those who will come to Jesus to be freed from their demons, he himself is that healing Truth that will make them free.

REFLECTION QUESTIONS

- Does God raise ordinary people from our midst to become prophets? Is there a cause for which you might become a prophet?
- What are the anxieties you most feel? Do you have a way to deal with them? What virtue do you think might help most in your attempts to control anxieties? St. Paul recommends “adherence to the Lord without distraction.”
- Jesus “taught them as one having authority and not as the scribes.” Was there an incident that confirmed Jesus’ teaching and showed people its authenticity? If you can’t have absolute confirmation, as they did, what will work for you? Trust?

FROM POPE FRANCIS

Being prophets may sometimes imply making waves. I do not know how to put it. ... Prophecy makes noise, uproar, some say ‘a mess.’ But in reality, the charism of religious people is like yeast: prophecy announces the spirit of the Gospel.

~Pope Francis, “A Big Heart Open to God”, *America*, September 30, 2013

LIVING THE READINGS

- Be a prophet for your cause(s)! Your cause does not have to be something explicitly ‘religious’ or ‘Catholic’, but something that is important to you, such as your family, supporting your friends, standing against vices, or Catholic topics such as right to life, the environment, the liturgy/Eucharist, or so many more.
- This week, take time to consider how you can help others “[adhere] to the Lord without distraction”. How do you and/or can you help family, friends, neighbors, and colleagues in their faith journey?
- In your opinion, what are the ‘unclean spirits’ of modern society? Share how you have (or you can) become ‘single-minded’ in your understanding of this issue.