

Homily  
January 30, 2022  
4<sup>th</sup> Sunday in Ordinary Time  
23:05 – 33:13

Jeremiah was a bullfrog. (Chuckles) But we're not here today to talk about that particular Jeremiah.

We are here and have been here to listen to the call of Jeremiah, in Chapter 1 of his prophetic book. Jeremiah is called by the Lord, specifically knit in his mother's womb. This plan was laid out by God, even as Jeremiah was conceived. And the Lord charges Jeremiah to proclaim his word to the people of Israel. And the basic message he's called to proclaim is, "Be faithful to the Covenant and have confidence in God."

**Faithful to the Covenant.** For 40 years, he proclaimed this. Forty years as a prophet. And there were highs and lows, but the lows seemed to be larger than the highs. For Jeremiah was very much put-upon and challenged throughout those 40 years.

**Confidence in God.** He was calling the people to have confidence in God and not to rely upon foreign alliances, or armies, or any sort of machinations, or idol worship to solve the problem of Assyria. In both cases, they didn't listen. No. They were at times very unfaithful to the Covenant.

And they did all the things that Jeremiah counseled them against in the name of the Lord. **Trust in God. God will get you through this.** It got really bad at times to the point where certain officials threw him into a dry well. - Except there was mud at the bottom. – And that's where he sat for a long time.

And even as Jerusalem was conquered and destroyed and most people were carried off to Babylon, he was carried off by others to Egypt, against his will. But this put-upon prophet was faithful to the end. Keeping the Covenant and trusting in God.

We hear in the Gospel a very similar experience. Today we hear at first an, acclamation that they thought he was wonderful, this Jesus. Yet that quickly turns into - *We don't like what we're hearing. And you're not talking about us. You're supposed to be talking about us, not those foreigners: that Naman and that woman in Sidon. You're trying to say that we're not the only ones to receive the message.* And they took exception to him and as we heard, they were going to throw him off a hill.

Two weeks ago, we heard of Jesus' baptism, his call by God: **You are my beloved son, in whom I am well pleased.** Last week, we heard of Jesus coming to Nazareth, picking up the scroll and proclaiming his mission, if you will; his "mission statement," his vocation to care for the least of the least. But even that, so well received, ends up in tragedy, as we well know: death on a cross. But Jesus was faithful to the Covenant and he held onto confidence in the Father.

How many here want to be a prophet? Raise your hand. Who's raising their hand back there?  
Andrew, really? (To his wife, Tracy: You'd better talk to your husband.)

Well, very few of us are called to be prophets. A few of us are called to be priests or Religious. Many of us are called to marriage as a vocation. Some to the single life. Some to consecrated life. But we are all called to a **first vocation**, the vocation of love.

That's what Paul is talking about to the Corinthians, who have in the past two weeks been fighting over who's the best with the mightiest spiritual gift, and what are all these gifts that are given in the same Spirit and that you're called to use for the good of the community. Today they're still squirming and he finally says, "This is your mission. This is your vocation. Every one of you. To love."

Now this reading, this second reading, we have heard how many times at weddings? It's kind of like you hear it and think, "Oh! We're at a wedding!" Well, not this time. Every three years it comes around on this Fourth Sunday, Cycle C. And note what love is. **Patience. Kindness.** Those are the two positive words Paul uses.

How many here are naturally patient? There are a few. Most of us are not. How many here are always kind? (No hands raised)

You know, I know I've said this before. Love is a decision. We have to decide, more than not, to be patient, which means to suffer with the other, or in our own self, own reality. We have to decide to be kind. Don't we? It's a constant. Whether it's with a fellow student, whether it's with a grandchild, whether it's with him (pointing at Mike Luellen). We have to think about that and decide we want to do it.

The other negative descriptions that Paul uses - it is not jealous, it is not rude, it is not inflated, et cetera, et cetera - those come a lot easier and quickly, don't they? They just erupt out of us, but they are not love.

I urge us all to pick this reading up later today or this week, maybe even every day. And read the full depth of it. Just let it soak in. Not as "I'm going to beat myself up with this." Okay? But as a measure for reflection.

If my vocation is first and foremost to love, do I reflect upon that? And where am I on that journey of vocation which is a constant calling: to live out that call which has been given?

Jeremiah was not a bullfrog. And Jesus and Jeremiah were, as prophets, very faithful. And how were they so faithful? They knew their first vocation: to love. It's the same as ours. May we walk in it very well.