

**Sunday, January 31, 2010**

**Fourth Sunday in Ordinary Time**

Jeremiah 1: 1-4, 17-19; Psalm 71; 1 Corinthians 12:31-13:13; Luke 4: 21-30

Prophets frustrate our expectations, and God often frustrates prophets! Jeremiah is one who argues that he is too young to be a prophet. God insists that he who was consecrated before he was born stand up and speak to all nations. Psalm 71 could have been written by Jeremiah, once he let God send him. Although his message is often forlorn and he himself beset by depression, he is a man who loves God. Paul writes about love, the greatest of all God's gifts, trumping even faith. Jesus shows us that love is not romantic, for no sooner have his townspeople accepted his "gracious words" than Jesus draws their murderous rage by announcing that God is claiming pagans as God's own children. Prophets console the afflicted and challenge those who are closed to God's ways.

Paul describes how love acts. Jesus did too with his parables of the Good Samaritan, the prodigal son. He demonstrated love as well. For example, washing his disciples' feet, eating with outcasts, welcoming those judged sinful. What do you remember of Jesus' teachings about and ways of loving? Ask the Spirit to teach you, and listen. Then show Jesus how you want to love and listen to him again. Ask to love well.

Deepen our love of sinners and outcasts, generous and loving Jesus. Thank you for creating us prophets through Baptism. Let our light and love shine to those in need.

**Monday, February 1, 2010**

2 Samuel 15: 13-14, 30, 16: 5-13; Psalm 3; Mark 5: 1-20

Both readings mention stones. In David's sorrow that his son Absalom has turned against him, a shouting man throws stones at David. David protects the wild man, wondering if indeed God has sent him to curse him. Jesus confronts a howling man who gashes himself with stones, demon-possessed, with strength to break out of shackles. Jesus approaches him, unafraid. The man bows before Jesus and cries out, "Do not torment me!" Jesus sends the multitude of demons into pigs who rush into the sea. The man is healed and wants to join Jesus. Jesus however tells him to go home and tell his friends how much the Lord (the Jewish name for God) has graced him with mercy.

When was there a time in your life when you felt cursed? When you "gashed" yourself with "stones" of self-loathing, of disgust with your "shackles" and addictions, of fear for your mental stability? To whom did you turn? What happened next? As you remember these terrible times, how will you respond to Jesus, your healer?

Jesus, do not let us harden our hearts against leaders. Give us the wisdom to discern when they should be confronted, and to do that with justice as our only aim.

**Tuesday, February 2, 2010**

**Presentation of the Lord**

Hebrews 2: 10-11, 13-18; Psalm 24; Luke 2: 22-40

The “Lord” (*Adonai*) is what Jews call God, never using the sacred YHWH. Paradoxically on this feast when the Lord is presented to the Lord, it is a baby who is offered to God. This baby is called “the source of our salvation” in the Hebrews passage, our brother, a merciful and faithful high priest, “like us in every respect.” In the gospel, Simeon calls him “salvation,” “a light of revelation to the Gentiles and to Israel, the glory.” Simeon also calls him a “sign that will be opposed.” God coming to us as an infant, needing to grow in wisdom, needing to grow in grace, needing to learn to speak and walk and be toilet trained is indeed a scandal, a sign opposed by those who want a glorious and powerful Lord.

And you? How do you feel about such a helpless God? Why do you think God would come to us so dependent and needy? Ask. Then listen. If we have seen Jesus, he tells us, we have seen the Father. Is anyone in the Trinity powerful? Ask. Listen.

O wondrous exchange! May we come to share the divinity of him who emptied himself to share our humanity. May we reverence his and all humanity.

### **Wednesday, February 3, 2010**

2 Samuel 24: 2, 9-17; Psalm 32; Mark 6:1-6

We meet a new prophet, Gad, accosting David, and in the gospel, Jesus refers to himself as a prophet. David has sinned by numbering the people “who could draw the sword.” Planning a war, is he? Through Gad God gives David a choice of his punishment, and a pestilence afflicts the people (“God sent a pestilence”). God finally repents and David asks, why should the innocent suffer? “Let your hand be against me,” he says; “I alone have sinned.” Jesus’ hometown rejects him, and while Jesus doesn’t judge them (is simply “amazed at their unbelief), he “could do no work of power there.” Healing takes not only the power of Jesus but the faith of those needing healing.

Ask for the grace of an ever-deepening faith. Ask for an ever more encompassing healing of yourself, your family and circle of friends, our society, our church, the world. Beg for an end to all war.

“In time of great distress, preserve your people,” especially in Haiti, in the war-torn Middle East and countries of Africa, and give us all peace.

### **Thursday, February 4, 2010**

1 Kings 2:1-4, 10-12; canticle from 1 Chronicles 29; Mark 6: 7-13

David dies, blessing and warning his son Solomon to keep the Lord’s ways. “His kingdom was firmly established.” In Mark’s gospel, Jesus shares his authority with the

twelve, sending them on mission. He sends them to drive out demons, a real theme in Mark's gospel, but they also anoint the sick with oil to heal them. Jesus tells them to travel lightly, and to leave any place that does not welcome them.

Have you discovered any demons that you want Jesus to cast out? Talk with him about it. What parts of your life and your loves need anointing? Ask for it. Have you ever stayed too long in a place or in a relationship, when you should have shaken the dust from your feet? What did you learn?

Thank you for sharing your authority with us, Jesus. Teach us to use it to do justice, to offer mercy, to work for reconciliation and unity. We need your authority.

### **Friday, February 5, 2010**

Sirach 47: 2-11; Psalm 18; Mark 6: 14-29

“John had been telling Herod...” There is persistence in prophets. John names the sin adultery. While Herod liked to listen to John, Herodias “had a grudge against him.” When she asked for John's head, “the king was deeply grieved...”, yet sins further. He sounds like David who also committed murder. David's life is summarized in this chapter from Sirach, but his sins are barely acknowledged. He is praised for both his warring and his artistic and musical liturgies.

When do you use the gift of perseverance? For what do you need persistence? If your life were to be summarized in three paragraphs, what would you want said about you? What would Jesus want said about you? Ask him. Listen.

We make music to praise you, God, even while we mourn the poverty of your people. Help us to persevere in prayer and in action, to do justice and love tenderly.

### **Saturday, February 6, 2010**

1 Kings 3: 4-13; Psalm 119; Mark 6: 30-34

In his youth, Solomon was humble, asking God for wisdom, “an understanding mind to govern your people, able to discern...” God was pleased and gave him a wise and discerning mind, and also riches and honors. The latter will eventually lead Solomon to be unjust, enslaving his own people. Jesus welcomes his friends back from “their first mission,” and invites them to come apart for awhile to rest. Although they try to get away by boat, the people “hurried on foot” and gave them no rest. Jesus takes a long, loving look at the crowd and “had compassion on them.”

Take a long, loving look at your youth. What was important to you then? How did that change, or did it? Can you hear Jesus invite you to come apart and rest awhile? Hear him call your name, hear him thank you for all your work on his behalf. Then just smile at him and rest in his loving gaze.

O God, make us aware that we are one with all creeds, colors, and cultures around the world. Your Spirit unites us. Help us to believe and to act out of our belief with compassion.