

FOURTH SUNDAY OF ORDINARY TIME

January 30, 2022 C

Facilitator: *Let us take a minute to consciously acknowledge that we are in the presence of God and ask Him to help us to hear the word He wants us to hear this week.*

Pause for a moment and then play a religious song.

Opening prayer: *Loving God, thank you for gathering us together. You formed each of us in our mother's womb and appointed us to be your ambassador in our families and communities. May your Holy Spirit breathe upon us so that we will understand and act on the word you speak to us during our time together. Amen.*

Response to last week's word: [Facilitator briefly recalls last week's Gospel.] *Let us spend a few minutes sharing how the Word we heard God speak to us last week has unfolded in our lives during the week.*

Facilitator reads focus statement: Both Jeremiah and Jesus are sent by God to be God's spokesmen to the nations. Both experience strong resistance from the people. The second reading is Paul's famous hymn on the nature of love.

Let us listen to God's word to hear what it is He wants to say to us in these readings today. As you hear a word, you may want to underline it or write it down to remember.

Read the First Reading, the Psalm and the Second Reading, pausing briefly after each one.

FIRST READING: Jeremiah 1:4-5, 17-19

In calling Jeremiah to be God's prophet or mouthpiece, God makes three assertions: 1) "*I formed you*"—a reference to how God is our potter and we his clay; 2) "*I knew you*"—a reference to the intimate relationship between God and Jeremiah; and 3) "*I dedicated you*"—a reference to how God has consecrated Jeremiah to do God's work.

God prepares Jeremiah for the resistance he will receive from the people. "*Kings and priests will oppose you, but they will not prevail*" for God will strengthen Jeremiah to withstand all rejection. During his lifetime, Jeremiah, like Jesus, is a total failure, but in time he is recognized as one of Israel's greatest prophets. Jeremiah is a wonderful example of "the triumph of failure."

RESPONSORIAL PSALM 71

This psalm expresses the feelings of one who encounters opposition but trusts deeply in God's protection. We can envision both Jeremiah and Jesus praying this psalm.

SECOND READING: 1Corinthians 12:31–13:13

In his commentary on *First Corinthians*, Richard Hays states that the purpose of 1Cor. 13 is to portray love as

the *sine qua non* ("without which there is nothing") of the Christian life, and to insist that love must:

- Govern the exercise of all the gifts of the Spirit (12:4-11, 27-31).
- Inform and inspire the mutual respect and relatedness of all members of the community (12:12-26).
- Be the motivation that draws the praying community together for the liturgy of the Lord's Supper (11:17-33).
- Guide both the weak and the strong members of the community in making decisions so that they may not offend the consciences of others, e.g., eating meat offered to idols (8:1-13).
- Prompt the caring correction of brothers or sisters who have sinned (5:1-13).
- Assist in overcoming whatever divisions threaten the unity of the Church (1:10-17).
- Inspire generosity in the hearts of those from whom Paul requests a collection for the poor (16:1-4).

Perhaps Paul's intent is best summed up in his own words: "*Your every act should be done with love*" (16:14).

Having established love as an ethical principle and a way of life without which the manifestation of spiritual gifts has no meaning or value (1-3), Paul proceeds to describe what love (now personified) does and does not do. After stating that love is patient and

kind, Paul lists eight things that love *is not*, namely, jealous, pompous, rude, etc.

Paul's reference to his childhood may be a subtle challenge to readers to "grow up," to look at love and learn from love, and thereby grow to maturity in Christ who is the love of God incarnate. In the concluding verses, Paul speaks about the theological virtues of faith, hope and love. These will remain, insists Paul. However, when believers pass through death to eternal life, *faith* will yield to seeing God "face to face," *hope* will be fulfilled, and *love* will endure forever.

PROCLAMATION OF THE GOSPEL: Luke 4:21-30

As we listen to this first reading of the Gospel, let us listen with our minds for the content.

**A participant reads the Gospel,
then all pause to reflect.**

As we listen to this second reading of the Gospel, let us listen with our hearts to what Jesus is saying to us. Be aware of what draws us in and what part of the Gospel might be a challenge to embrace. You may want to underline or write down the word you hear.

GOSPEL: Luke 4:21-30

In this continuation of last Sunday's Gospel, the people react to Jesus' "Inaugural Address." Initially, they were very enthusiastic and were "*amazed at his gracious words*." But then things suddenly go sour. They question Jesus and his identity: "*Isn't this the son of Joseph?*" Jesus responds: "*No prophet is accepted in his native place*." Then Jesus makes reference to the *Gentiles* (people like the widow of Zarephath and Namaan) who were more open to the prophets than the Jewish people. This reference to the Gentiles (the archenemies of the Jews) and Jesus' desire to include the Gentiles in his plan of salvation infuriate the people. They try to kill Jesus but he escapes for his "*hour has not yet come*." This event foreshadows the opposition and rejection that Jesus will experience in future years.

FAITH-SHARING QUESTIONS

1. Share with the group or person next to you what spoke to you most in the Gospel. With this first question, try to refrain from commenting on what others said. Just share what spoke to you and then move on to the next person.

2. God truly wants to use each one of us to be his representative in our families, places of work and

recreation. What can block and help us from living this vocation?

3. Gandhi, a Hindu, reached out to Muslims. Yitzak Rabin, a Jew, reached out to the Palestinians. Archbishop Romero of El Salvador reached out to the poor. All were killed. Why do we kill our prophets? Why are prophets hard to take?

4. See paragraph 3 of the second reading which says: "love is patient...is not rude, etc." Which of the eight negatives (jealousy, conceit, etc.) do you find most challenging to keep out of your life?

5. In the Gospel, a mob mentality takes over. Do you ever have to deal with a mob mentality as you seek to practice your faith? Can you name examples of mob mentalities prevalent in our society today?

6. What is the one thing Jesus is saying to us in this Sunday's Gospel about how a disciple should speak or act?

JOURNALING: *Having listened to God's word and listened to others reflections on it, take a quiet moment to reflect on what you are hearing God say to you. Your response will be what you bring to Eucharist on Sunday, asking Jesus to help you respond as He asks of you. When ready, jot down your reflections.*

PRAYING WITH THE WORD

Let us now pause to see how something(s) said in the reading might lead us into shared prayer. Suggestions: "*Dear Lord, you called me into being for your purpose, please help me to love enough to fulfill your plan*." "*Please open my eyes to see how I reject others and open my heart to truly love them*."

RESPONDING TO THE WORD

Share with the person next to you one way you can act on this week's readings. Suggestions: Forgive someone who has rejected you. Meditate on the second reading and replace the word "Love" with your name, e.g., "Joe is patient...Joe is kind" ...and see how you do.

CONCLUDE WITH PRAYERS OF THANKSGIVING, PETITION AND INTERCESSION.

FACILITATOR: What are we grateful for? For what and for whom do we wish to pray? Suggestion: Pray for all those who are met with rejection even violence.

10. “Love is what makes you smile when you’re tired.” (Terri, age 4)

CLOSING PRAYER (together)

Source of love and life, you have called us to be your instruments from the moment of our existence. Give us a prophet’s courage and a disciple’s ability to love, even when living the words and ways of Jesus is difficult. Help us remember that you are always with us so that we can do unto others as you do unto us – love without end. Amen

What is love? Children know.

Children, ages 4 to 8, were asked, “What does love mean?” Here are some of their answers:

1. “When my grandmother got arthritis, she couldn’t bend over and paint her toenails anymore. So my grandfather does it for her all the time, even when his hands got arthritis, too. That’s love.” (Rebecca, age 8)
2. “When someone loves you, the way they say your name is different. You know that your name is safe in their mouth.” (Billy, age 4)
3. “Love is when a girl puts on perfume and a boy puts on shaving cologne and they go out and smell each other.” (Karl, age 5)
4. “Love is when my mommy makes coffee for my daddy and she takes a sip before giving it to him, to make sure the taste is OK.” (Danny, age 7)
5. “Love is what’s in the room with you at Christmas if you stop opening presents and listen.” (Bobby, age 7)
6. “If you want to learn to love better, you should start with a friend whom you hate.” (Nikka, age 6)
7. “Love is when you tell a guy you like his shirt, then he wears it every day.” (Noelle, age 7)
8. “I know my older sister loves me because she gives me all her old clothes and has to go out and buy new ones.” (Lauren, age 4)
9. “Love is when you go out to eat and give somebody most of your french fries without making them give you any of theirs.” (Chrissy, age 6)