

4th Sunday in Ordinary Time (Cycle C)

Jer 1:4-5, 17-19; 1 Cor 12:31-13:13; Lk 4:21-30

Recently, I was looking at my High School Yearbook, and reflecting on how all of us kids (now adults) have turned out. Going back 40 years, we would have been surprised to see that one person from my graduating class (Mary McDonald) turned out to be a TV and Movie Star. Others became doctors, nurses, lawyers, Deputy Sheriffs, teachers, construction workers, janitors...you name it...There is even one Deacon in the group....But back then, we couldn't have imagined that. It is much like Jesus' experience in today's Gospel. The Nazarenes couldn't believe that Jesus, the Carpenter's son was a Prophet and a Miracle Worker. After all, he grew up in their town. They knew his family. He probably had made furniture for them. Yet, they heard about his fame and thought to themselves, "Who does he think he is?"

The Prophet Jeremiah didn't have it any easier. He didn't want to accept what God had planned for him, but God told him: "Before I

formed you in the womb I knew you,
before you were born I dedicated you,
a prophet to the nations I appointed you.”

God had a plan for Jeremiah.

Paul, the author of our second reading, also was part of God’s plan, but Paul didn’t realize it at first. God had to give him a concussion to make him aware of his calling. Hopefully, we don’t have to be hit by a bolt of lightning to understand God’s plan for us.

You see, I believe that God does have a plan for us. I believe that all of us have an important role to play in God’s Plan. Some of us have only a short time on this world. Some of us live a long life. Some of us live relatively happy lives. Some of us have great hardships, but all of us have a role to play. Maybe we are here to say a certain word to a certain person at a certain time. Maybe we are here to raise a child that will go on to do something great for humanity. Maybe we are here to land a plane on the Hudson River when the engines conk out. But whatever we are here for, it is to fulfill God’s will.

But how do we know if we are doing what God wants? Paul gives us the answer in our Second Reading: “If I speak in human and angelic tongues, but do not have love, I am a resounding gong or a clashing cymbal. And if I have the gift of prophecy, and comprehend all mysteries and all knowledge; if I have all faith so as to move mountains, but do not have love, I am nothing. If I give away everything I own, and if I hand my body over so that I may boast, but do not have love, I gain nothing.”

Love is the answer. If we respond to the world with love then we are sure to be doing God’s Will in this world.

Now, love can be broken down into different types of love. There is, of course, romantic love, but the kind of love we are talking about here isn’t romantic love. Another kind of love is the love

that members of a family have for each other called familial love, such as the love of a parent for a child and vice-a-versa. There is the love that friends have for each other, and there is, also a special kind of love called unconditional love (agape). That's the kind of love that God has for us and that we are to have for one another. This last kind of love is what Paul is talking about in his Letter to the Corinthians. This is the kind of selfless love for others where nothing is expected in return.

That kind of Love was the reason that Jeremiah spoke the word of God even when he was beaten and abused. That kind of Love was the Reason that Jesus endured torture and the crucifixion. That kind of Love was why Paul and the other apostles endured similar treatment.

When we love that kind of Love, we are partners with God in his plan of salvation.

Now, since we are close to February 2nd, I'd like to recommend a movie for you to see that deals with the kind of love I'm talking about. It is called "Groundhog Day" and it stars Bill Murray. In the film Bill Murray plays a jerk of a weatherman who goes to Punxsutawney, Pennsylvania for Groundhog Day and makes a total mess of things in his life and the lives of others because of his own selfishness. When he awakes the next morning, he finds that he is stuck in February 2nd and has to relive the day over and over again...until he gets it right...until he learns to love unconditionally and to help others. The lesson he learns is as Paul describes in his letter to the Corinthians:

"Love is patient, love is kind.

It is not jealous, it is not pompous,

It is not inflated, it is not rude,

it does not seek its own interests,

it is not quick-tempered, it does not brood over injury,

it does not rejoice over wrongdoing

but rejoices with the truth.

It bears all things, believes all things,
hopes all things, endures all things.

Love never fails.”

And we can never fail, if we love.