

Fourteenth Sunday in Ordinary Time

There was a new pastor who came to the parish. He started preaching the first week. He had about ten sheets of paper to preach. As he was preaching, the wind from the fan blew up and all the papers flew from the pulpit. He ran and collected all the papers. He didn't know where he left the homily. He asked the congregation, "Do you remember where I left my homily?" The lady at the front row said, "The last two lines in the last page, Father."

Dear Friends,

All the three readings bring the challenges that we face in our lives. The challenges are both personal as well as community in nature.

The first reading from the book of Ezekiel has a warning about the challenges he was going to face for the people of Israel. He was made aware of what kind of message he was going to deliver. He knew that he would face rejection, humiliation and retaliation because of people's rebellious nature. Ezekiel being a priest was pressed to be a prophet and sent to deliver the message. We all have the nature of hearing the good message and we struggle to hear challenging and sad messages.

In the second reading, St. Paul brings out his personal weakness which bothers him. This was variously interpreted as a sickness or physical disability, a temptation or a handicap connected with his apostolic activity. Paul was content with his weakness and expressed that he was strong in his faith.

Paul discovered positive value in his pain. He understood that suffering, accepted as God's gift, produces patience, sensitivity, compassion, and a genuine appreciation of life's blessings. Hence, Paul declares that the weaknesses which continue to mark his life as an apostle represent the effective working of the power of the crucified Christ in Paul's ministry. Paul was content with weaknesses and hardships for the sake of Christ; we, too, will find, in our surrender to God's Love, that His grace does suffice for all our needs.

In the Gospel, Jesus was shocked to see the mixed reaction from his own community. Without specifying any prophets of the Old Testament in particular, he remembers the rejection of the prophets in the past. One set of people were astonished and the other were recalling their own memories about him in their native town. The people of his town did not understand or comprehend his divinity or being a son of man. It was beyond their expectation that he is the son of man. Their question was that how come a carpenter's son could become a political messiah. So, they totally did not expect Jesus, the carpenter's son to be their messiah. But things happened so they admired him, and were full of shock

and questions. Unable to move past their preconceived notions, they refused to believe in him.

There are three things to be noted for our reflections:

1. During Jesus' time, it was hard for them to believe in the divinity of Him or accepting him as son of God or another prophet. He lived as a human person among them. It was a challenge for them to look at him as a divine person.
2. During our time, it was easy for us to believe in the divine person of Christ. We believe in him in the Eucharist and other sacraments. It is hard for us to believe in him as human. That's why it is hard for us to believe other human beings and love them equally as we love God (1 John 4: 7).
3. It is always hard for us to hear the message that is prophetic. We don't want to hear what we don't like. Let us be open to God's words.

We all know our weaknesses. Be happy and content with your weaknesses if God says the same to you. "My Grace is sufficient for you". Other things are evil. Try to be away of that.