

Gratitude Foundation



*“Were not ten cleansed? Where are the other nine?
Has only this foreigner returned to give thanks to God?”*

(Lk. 17:15-17)

The Fourth Sunday of Ordinary Time—Year B

Fr. Glenn Joseph Theoret
Executive Director

www.gratitudefoundation.us
frglenn@gratitudefoundation.us

3713 County 416 20th Road
Gladstone, MI 49837

“In all things give thanks, it is God’s will for you in Christ Jesus”

(1 Thess: 5:18)

Fourth Sunday in Ordinary Time

Reading 1

Dt 18:15-20

Moses spoke to all the people, saying:

"A prophet like me will the LORD, your God, raise up for you from among your own kin; to him you shall listen.

This is exactly what you requested of the LORD, your God, at Horeb on the day of the assembly, when you said,

'Let us not again hear the voice of the LORD, our God, nor see this great fire any more, lest we die.'

And the LORD said to me, 'This was well said.

I will raise up for them a prophet like you from among their kin, and will put my words into his mouth;

he shall tell them all that I command him.

Whoever will not listen to my words which he speaks in my name, I myself will make him answer for it.

But if a prophet presumes to speak in my name an oracle that I have not commanded him to speak, or speaks in the name of other gods, he shall die.'"

Responsorial Psalm

Ps 95:1-2, 6-7, 7-9

R. (8) If today you hear his voice, harden not your hearts.

Come, let us sing joyfully to the LORD;

let us acclaim the rock of our salvation.

Let us come into his presence with thanksgiving;

let us joyfully sing psalms to him.

R. If today you hear his voice, harden not your hearts.

Come, let us bow down in worship;

let us kneel before the LORD who made us.

For he is our God,

and we are the people he shepherds, the flock he guides.

R. If today you hear his voice, harden not your hearts.

Oh, that today you would hear his voice:

"Harden not your hearts as at Meri bah,

as in the day of Massah in the desert,

Where your fathers tempted me;

they tested me though they had seen my works."

R. If today you hear his voice, harden not your hearts.

Reading 2

1 Cor 7:32-35

Brothers and sisters:

I should like you to be free of anxieties.

An unmarried man is anxious about the things of the Lord,
how he may please the Lord.

But a married man is anxious about the things of the world,
how he may please his wife, and he is divided.

An unmarried woman or a virgin is anxious about the things of the Lord,
so that she may be holy in both body and spirit.

A married woman, on the other hand,
is anxious about the things of the world,
how she may please her husband.

I am telling you this for your own benefit,
not to impose a restraint upon you,
but for the sake of propriety
and adherence to the Lord without distraction.

Alleluia

Mt 4:16

R. **Alleluia, alleluia.**

The people who sit in darkness have seen a great light;
on those dwelling in a land overshadowed by death,
light has arisen.

R. **Alleluia, alleluia.**

Gospel

Mk 1:21-28

Then they came to Capernaum,

and on the sabbath Jesus entered the synagogue and taught.

The people were astonished at his teaching,

for he taught them as one having authority and not as the scribes.

In their synagogue was a man with an unclean spirit;

he cried out, "What have you to do with us, Jesus of Nazareth?"

Have you come to destroy us?

I know who you are—the Holy One of God!"

Jesus rebuked him and said,

"Quiet! Come out of him!"

The unclean spirit convulsed him and with a loud cry came out of him.

All were amazed and asked one another,

"What is this?"

A new teaching with authority.

He commands even the unclean spirits, and they obey him."

His fame spread everywhere throughout the whole region of Galilee.

Exegesis

Dt 18:15-20

God is love. Love is relational. God seeks to be in constant relationship with us. Relationships require communication. God seeks to be in constant communication with us. There is no limit to God, therefore no limit to the modes of communication of God. God speaks to us through the totality of creation. Having said that, God chose to communicate in a specific way in and through a particular people. God chose to speak to his people through the Law and the Prophets and when the time was right, He spoke to us through His only Son, and the Word became Flesh. Jesus is ultimately the fulfillment of the promise of God to Moses in Deuteronomy 18. (See John 1:21, 6:14, Acts 3:22-23, 7:37)

Listen to the call of the Prophet Jeremiah. “The word of the Lord came to me thus: ‘Before I formed you in the womb I knew you, before you were born, I dedicated you, prophet to the nations I appointed you... To whomever I send you, you shall go; whatever I command you, you shall speak. Have no fear before them, because I am with you to deliver you, says the Lord.’ Then the Lord extended his hand and touched my mouth, saying, ‘See I place my words in your mouth!’” (Jer. 1:4-9)

“Now listen to the words of the Lord: ‘Should there be a prophet among you, in visions will I reveal myself to him, in dreams I will speak to him: not so with my servant Moses! Throughout my house he bears my trust: face to face I speak to him, plainly and not in riddles. The presence of the Lord he beholds.’” (Num. 12:6-8) “In the beginning was the Word and the Word was with God...” (John 1:1) In this beginning, the prologue of John’s Gospel, the very literal translation might read, the Word was turned toward God, or face to face with God. “...and the Word was God.” (John 1:1)

The Word of God has a source, that source is God. “...And the Word became flesh and made His dwelling among us.” Preaching the Word of God requires a deep personal relationship with Jesus, the Word made flesh. It involves sitting face to face with God on a routine basis. A preacher cannot give what he does not have. The fact that God is choosing to speak to his beloved children in and through the preacher is an incredible gift and an awesome responsibility. God is warning us today through His prophet Moses, to take this responsibility with great care.

Ps 95:1-2, 6-7, 7-9

Psalms 95 is believed to be an enthronement song, a liturgical song sung while the people entered Yahweh’s presence with praise and thanksgiving. It proclaims Yahweh as a saving God, e.g. the Rock of our Salvation. Throughout Sacred Scripture God is portrayed as Rock. It speaks of the immutability of God. God is our anchor point in a passing world. God is the Rock that we can rest upon in the turbulent oceans of this world.

In His role as Savior, God fulfills His promise to shepherd His people. As His beloved sheep that He pastures we must come to know the voice of the Shepherd. That begins with listening with our hearts.

Note that in this Psalm God is also praised as Creator God, e.g., “the Lord who made us.” Our God is our creator and our savior, the giver and sustainer of life, who desires to shepherd us, to lead and guide our lives to green pastures and living water, to the repose of eternal life. And so, we give God thanks and praise!

Exegesis (Continued)

1 Cor 7:32-35

Paul expected an immanent Parousia (1 Thes 4:16-17, 1 Cor 15:51-52) and recommended not pretense but detachment. Anxious concern is a characteristic of unredeemed existence (see R. Bultmann TDNT5 589-93)¹ Again this week St. Paul is using marriage and relational situations to move our attention to eternal things, toward a reality beyond this world and the cares that come with it. In a world in constant flux, in a world that is passing way, we are called to anchor into the eternal Rock that is Christ.

Mk 1:21-28

Our Gospel passage today is again at the beginning of the public ministry of Jesus. It follows the temptation of Jesus in the desert, the proclamation of the kingdom and the calling of the first disciples. It strikes me that Jesus immediately faces the forces of evil head on. The first encounter is with Satan himself in the desert. And now He is faced with one of his demons.

We are told that Jesus taught with authority. The Greek word is ἐξουσία (*exousia*). This is a general word for “power” or “authority” and is often used for human authority (e.g., Matt 8:9). It is used to refer to supernatural forces in several ways. It is used in the constructions “power (*exousia*) of darkness” (Luke 22:53; Col 1:13) and “power (*exousia*) of Satan” (Acts 26:18), but these refer to power as an abstract quality, not to supernatural beings. However, in several passages (1 Cor 15:24; Eph 1:21; 6:12; Col 2:15; 1 Pet 3:22) “authorities” (*exousia*) refers in a generic way to supernatural beings, which Christ has overcome and against which Christians must struggle.²

The supernatural power of God and the power of Satan meet head on. The power of God prevails. Jesus commanded the evil spirits, and they are rendered impotent. The power, *exousia*, of God and the word of God is on full display, the power to effect and change reality.

The story of the healing of the centurion’s servant found in the 8th Chapter of the Gospel of Matthew clearly describes the power of God’s Word. “⁸ But the centurion answered him, ‘Lord, I am not worthy to have you come under my roof; but only say the **word**, and my servant will be healed.’ ⁹ For I am a man under authority, (*exousia*), with soldiers under me; and I say to one, ‘Go,’ and he goes, and to another, ‘Come,’ and he comes, and to my slave, ‘Do this,’ and he does it.” ¹⁰ When Jesus heard him, he marveled, and said to those who followed him, “Truly, I say to you, not even in Israel have I found such faith. ¹¹ I tell you, many will come from east and west and sit at table with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob in the kingdom of heaven, ¹² while the sons of the kingdom will be thrown into the outer darkness; there men will weep and gnash their teeth.” ¹³ And to the centurion Jesus said, “Go; be it done for you as you have believed.” And the servant was healed at that very moment.” (Matt. 8: 8-13)

1. New Jerome Biblical Commentary. P.H. p 805.

2. J. A. McGuire-Moushon, “[Divine Beings.](#)” ed. Douglas Mangum et al., *Lexham Theological Wordbook*, Lexham Bible Reference Series (Bellingham, WA: Lexham Press, 2014).

Reflection

As a priest, today's first reading has deep meaning and importance to me. God has revealed to Moses His plan to speak to the people through prophets. The prophets are warned that they must only be heralds of His word and a prophet must never presume to speak God's word if God has not commanded it so. As a priest given the privilege and the awesome responsibility to preach the word of God every weekend and every day at Mass, I feel moved to take these words to heart. My prayer always begins by asking God the question, "What do you want me to communicate to Your people?" "What do you want them to hear?" That is always the starting point of my weekly homily preparation that begins on Sunday evening. As I stay with the scripture during the week I listen for God's voice.

The voice of God is unique. When God speaks, things happen. In the beginning God spoke, "God said, let there be light, and there was light." (Gen. 1:3) God spoke and everything came into being. The adjective that follows and highlights God's word through scripture is "dynamis" in the Greek. It means power. We get English words like dynamo or dynamite from the Greek word. As a child I remember my grandpa blowing up tree stumps on the farm. He would light the dynamite fuse and we would run for cover. When I looked up after the fallout was done raining down, the landscape had changed. God's word has the power in and of itself to effect change.

"In the beginning was the Word, and the word was with God, and the Word was God, and all things came into being through Him." (Jn. 1:1-2) "And the Word became flesh and made His dwelling among us..." (Jn 1:14) In today's Gospel when Jesus speaks in the synagogue He spoke with authority. He is God. He is the Eternal Word in the flesh. Not only does Jesus speak God's word, He IS God's word.

Jesus is the fulfillment of the promise that God makes through Moses in our first reading this weekend. It is interesting to note that the word "authority" referring to Jesus appears twice in our Gospel this weekend. I discovered an enlightening etymology relative to the word *authority*. The underlying Greek word is *exousia*. The word implies a supernatural origin. Sometimes it speaks of a power that comes to demons from Beelzebub. Most often it refers to a power that comes from God the source of all being. Jesus reveals Himself as God and so when He (God) speaks the landscape is changed, the sea is calmed, the sick are cured, demons are cast out, the dead are raised to life, water turns to wine, bread turns into His body and wine into His blood. His word has the ability to change the landscape of our lives, if only we open our hearts and our minds to listen and to allow His word to lead and guide our lives.

Remember the song, "Amazing Grace, how sweet the sound..." God is love. Grace is God's unconditional love given freely to us. The sound of grace must therefore be the voice of God. We are called to give God's love a voice in our world. We can do that by little acts of thoughtfulness and kindness. It can be a kind word to someone who is hurting, a simple care note, or a thinking of you note. It can be a phone call to a friend that you haven't heard from for a while. Any act done in God's love has the power to effect change in people's lives and therefore change the world one person at a time. May it begin with us.

Yours in Christ,



Personal Witness

As a second career vocation, being ordained at the age of 47, I have had many years of experience sitting in the pews at Mass. In those 47 years of Sunday, Holy Day, and for many years even daily Mass attendance, I have heard my share of homilies. Many of those homilies I found nourishing and sometimes even inspiring. Unfortunately, all too often the homilies were not inspiring, not well thought out, and seemed disjointed from the Word of God just proclaimed. It was nice to hear about the priest's golf game, his political views, his pet peeves, etc. but that is not what I came to church to hear. I came to hear the authentic Word of God. If I did not, I felt cheated. I was yearning to hear from God.

One thing that I observed over the years is that I could quickly discern which preacher had an authentic personal relationship with Jesus and those that did not. From the prophets throughout Hebrew Scripture, through the Apostles, the Church Fathers, and all the great men and women of our Church, they all shared their personal relationship with God. God chooses to communicate to us through these *earthen vessels*. God speaks to us in and through them.

One day during my years of deep searching, my early thirties, I was invited to attend a Lenten Parish Mission in my hometown. Three Franciscan Friars led the mission. They were members of Fr. Maximilian Kolbe's order. During one of the talks the priest told the story of Fr. Kolbe in incredible detail. It was the first time that I had heard the full story. Fr. Kolbe was the man who would step forward and take another prisoner's place in the starvation bunker at Auschwitz. It was a man that he did not even know. Then the priest pointed to the large crucifix over the altar and, while looking directly at me, he said, "Jesus took your place. He died for you." At that moment I felt that God was talking directly to me. I literally fell to my knees and thanked Jesus for taking my place. It was the first time that I had ever thanked Jesus for dying for my sins. For the first thirty years of my life, I had taken Jesus and the Crucifixion for granted. And now it was personal.

In that moment, overwhelmed with gratitude, my life was changed forever. For me the power of God's word took on flesh in Fr. Maximilian Kolbe, i.e. "There is no greater love than this, to lay down one's life for one's friends." (Jn. 15:13) God's word took on flesh that day through the powerful preaching of that elderly Franciscan Friar. I have no doubt that God was speaking directly to me at that moment in my life. My personal relationship with Jesus, a relationship that I had neglected for many years was rekindled.

Influenced by society around me, I had become very much a part of this entitlement generation. I was taking Jesus for granted, I was taking my faith for granted, I was taking life for granted. From that moment of grace, I moved from an underlying feeling of entitlement to being overwhelmed with gratitude. From that moment on life would be different. Life took on a whole new meaning. I wanted nothing more than to give back to God for the blessings of life, the gift of salvation, the gift of Christ and His Church. I was able to move from existing to living life to the fullest, the abundant life that Jesus promised. Faith begins with gratitude and gratitude has become the foundation of my faith and of my life. And for that I am eternally grateful!

