

4th Sunday per Annum - C
Jeremiah 1:4-5, 17-19;
I Corinthians 12:31-13:13;
Luke 4:21-30
Little Flower - 2/3/13

My Brothers and Sisters,

Today's reading from Jeremiah opens with God's call to Jeremiah: "*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.*" Today's reading, however, omits important dialogue between God and Jeremiah. In response, Jeremiah said, "*Ah, Lord GOD! ... I know not how to speak; I am too young*" [1:6]. God replied, "*Say not, 'I am too young.' To whomever I send you, you shall go; whatever I command you, you shall speak*" [1:7]. Then the LORD extended his hand and touched Jeremiah's mouth, saying, "*See, I place my words in your mouth!*" [1:9].

The first verse from today's reading suggests that we were in the mind of God before we were even thought of on earth. It also suggests that God has a plan for each of us or, in other words, each of us has a call, a vocation, from God. Also, as the last omitted verse suggests, whatever our specific vocation, all of us are called to be prophetic, i.e., to share God's word, God's message, with all those whose lives we touch in our specific vocations.

Jeremiah objected that he was too young, that he was still a child. It seems to me that he could have been speaking literally or figuratively. In either case, God dismissed his objection. If he was speaking literally, he probably was a very young man. Within churches or parishes there is often tension between older and younger members. However, this tension can be constructive. Little Flower needs the leadership of both our younger and our older members. Our older parishioners bring their wisdom and life experience. Our younger parishioners bring their hopes and dreams and challenge our assumptions. Although Little Flower is often thought of as an older parish with older parishioners, we are blessed with many younger, active parishioners who generously share their time, talent, and treasure with our community.

If Jeremiah was speaking figuratively, he probably felt that he was not spiritual enough or perhaps not good enough to be God's spokesperson. Too often Christians figure they do not have much to contribute. However, it is axiomatic in Christian theology that God chooses the weak and makes them strong in bearing witness to him. As the Lord Jesus said to St. Paul, "*My grace is sufficient for you, for power is made perfect in weakness*" [2 Cor. 12:9].

Last weekend, there was a poster in front of the sanctuary that suggested that if we honored with a moment of silence all the unborn lives lost through abortion since *Roe v Wade* in 1973, we would have to be silent for 100 years. The truth is that the Catholic Church is the most consistently prophetic voice in the world on life issues.

Prophets however, do not have it easy. At the beginning of today's Gospel, after Jesus' application of Isaiah 61:1 to himself, "*all spoke highly of him and were amazed at the gracious words that came from his mouth.*" However, by the end of the Gospel, after Jesus challenged them, the people "*were all filled with fury*" and tried to kill him. Besides Jesus, think of Archbishop Oscar Romero and Dr. Martin Luther King.

My brothers and sisters, in his First Letter to the Corinthians, St. Paul makes the point that love is the greatest gift of all, i.e., God's greatest gift to us, and the greatest gift we can give to others. The more we love, the more our lives will be prophetic.