

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

My Brothers and Sisters,

All three readings today are about vocation.

Today's first reading describes the call of the Prophet 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.*" In the following verses, God promises to be with Jeremiah as he proclaims God's word. This verse has an important message for us. It reminds us that God calls each of us by name. Each of us has a unique vocation from God, a part to play in God's plan that no one else can play.

If this is true, it is very important that we strive to discern God's call in our lives. The primary vocation of every human person is to become holy: "*Be holy, for I, the LORD your God, am holy*" [Lev. 19:2]. This is what Matthew Kelly is telling us when he tells us that God has an incredible dream for each of us, that we become the-best-version-of-ourselves. I wonder how many of us actually ask ourselves how God may be calling us to become holy.

Next each of us also has to discern whether God is calling us to be married, single, a priest, a religious brother, or a religious sister. I wonder how many Catholics today even give a passing thought to the possibility that God may be calling them or their child to religious life or priesthood. Likewise, when choosing a partner, I wonder how many pray to know if this is the person God wants him or her to marry. Our challenge is that God's call to us is not as dramatic as his call to Jeremiah.

We also have to discern to what career or job God is calling us. So many young people struggle to decide what they want to do with their life. Young people would do better to start asking themselves what God wants them to do with their lives.

Unfortunately, today's first reading leaves out the dialogue between Jeremiah and God: "*Ah, Lord GOD! I said, 'I know not how to speak; I am too young.' But the LORD answered me, Say not, 'I am too young.' To whomever I send you, you shall go; whatever I command you, you shall speak*" [4:6-7]. These verses remind us that God often speaks to us through the young who challenge us and challenge our ways. We who are older too often dismiss the voices of the young. In his homily for World Youth Day in Panama, Pope Francis said, "You are not the future of God, you young people are the now of God. He invites you and calls you in your communities and cities to go out and find your grandparents, your elders; to stand up and with them to speak out and realize the dream that the Lord has dreamed for you." Likewise, in our society, the voices of the elderly are also often dismissed.

Today's Gospel is the continuation of last Sunday's Gospel. Some of his listeners found it hard to believe that a son of Joseph could speak so eloquently and powerfully. Jesus' response was that "*no prophet is accepted in his own native place.*" One of the reasons we find it difficult to listen to people we know is because we often know their weaknesses and faults. However, we should also remember that God often chooses the weak and makes them strong in bearing witness to Him and to his Son, Jesus Christ.

My brothers and sisters, Paul's First Letter to the Corinthians reminds us of two important truths. We all know that actions speak louder than words. St. Paul reminds us that no matter what other gifts we have, they are nothing if we do not have love. We cannot truly proclaim the good news of Jesus if we do not love others. Second, the love of which St. Paul speaks is a very practical love: "*love is always patient and kind.... Love...delights in the truth; it is always ready to excuse, to trust, to hope, and to endure whatever comes*" and, above all, does not end.