

Daily Homily
Twenty-Second Sunday in Ordinary Time
[30 August 2020](#)

Out of all the Old Testament prophets, I think Jeremiah is one of my favorites. The name itself means, “the Lord will be raised” or “God will be exalted.” This prophet lived up to his name. That’s all he wanted, God to be number one, that’s was his vocation, to exalt God and to raise God up in the awareness and consciousness of God’s people.

However, the people chose lesser gods, gods of their own making, they chose themselves, their ego as their own god... time and again, Jeremiah had to confront those false gods, call them out, find them wanting, lying, dishonoring the one, true God. Jeremiah did not have a popular message to offer. No one wants to be told that their priorities are a mess. No one wants to be told that their self-assuredness is leading them to their downfall. No one wants to be told that what they hold onto, as their belief to advance their own personal purpose and pleasures is just simply wrong. Well, Jeremiah, had this vocation, this calling, this task.

It was no easy task.

Today, we hear him at the end of his day... offering his difficult message that no one wanted to hear, offering his life that every either ran from or confronted him with mockery and scorn. At the end of his day, he comes before the Lord and does what anyone of us would do – he whines and complains. We rarely see such raw vulnerability from any of the other prophets... but realize this... we don’t just see a cry baby in Jeremiah, rather, we see one who is so extremely close to God that he can be this real with God, this vulnerable with God that he can tell God exactly where he is... He feels duped... what a great word! Duped means ... God tricked Jeremiah into this vocation, into this calling. Another word is lulled or seduced.

How did God do this? Well, go back to Jeremiah’s call in Scripture. God lulled Jeremiah into this vocation with tender, loving words like “I formed you in the womb.” In other words, you are not here by chance... God wants him here. “I am with you to deliver you.” “I will place my words in your mouth.” In other words, Jeremiah is never alone and will never be without words from heaven. This is the reassurance, the confidence builder that the prophet needs to respond wholeheartedly and undividedly, without looking for options or loopholes or an exit strategy. These are the words that God uses to bring Jeremiah into service, to give his life for the life of others ... to not just love life, but to have a life of love. Jeremiah is in it.

But Jeremiah’s love that he offers is tough. And it’s more than that ... it’s not just about tough love. Jeremiah’s love is about a change to the core, a change of heart, a redirection of ways. His love is about something much more than just tough love. His love is about conversion. He calls the people to turn away from their falsity and return to reality. This conversion kind of love is real but difficult.

Jesus knows about this kind of love, a love that changes hearts. He sometimes offered it gently and tenderly depending on the circumstances ... to the woman at the well... to the woman caught in adultery... to the conversations he had with Nicodemus, and even to Pilate.

Peter, however, felt this love severely. Peter wants Jesus to fall down and worship another god... the god of ease ... the god of a lesser commitment ... the god of no sacrifice and the god that says, “if you

want your happiness, save yourself.” Jesus sees this false god and calls it for what it is: “Satan.” Peter called Rock ... is now Peter the stumbling stone. He is told to get behind Jesus... it is a play on words ... get behind Jesus and choose to follow him again, or get behind him so Jesus can leave him behind to eat his dust as he goes forward. The choice is never forced but it is always there.

Conversion.

Jeremiah dealt with it throughout his prophetic career. Peter felt it every time he came face to face with Jesus. From the moment he left his boat to the moment he said three times to the Risen Lord, “you know I love you.”

Conversion.

It’s a lifelong reality for any one of us. It is a lifeline to a deeper faith commitment, to a lasting relationship with the Lord.

Conversion.

Sometime it comes to us in tender and gentle tones... but also from God’s Word we hear today ... don’t be surprised if it comes to us with the harshness of being called out and having our false gods ripped away from us. If this happened to Jeremiah and Peter ... it’s bound to happen to us.

And when this happens do not despair... look to Jeremiah ... he did not abandon God, he did not give up,

he did not dive into disappointment and stay there... he certainly didn’t jump on the bandwagon of false gods... he couldn’t hold the message in, he had to go on... he found his passion revived, his heart aflame.

Look to Peter... he didn’t stay behind ... he didn’t hop on the bandwagon of what everyone else was doing, he didn’t go back to the boat, he got up and followed once again... he found his passion revived and his heart aflame.

As we encounter Jesus in this Eucharist, may our conversion be more complete, but our false gods cast aside and our passion revived, our heart aflame in the one, true and living God of our life.