

I Am With You, to Deliver You

Jer. 1: 4-5, 17-19; Ps. 71; 1 Cor. 12: 31-13: 13; Lk. 4: 21-30

He/she is a person who always *'says it like it is'*. This is an expression that describes a person who tells the truth and usually very directly. However, even if the person speaks the truth, many people find the blunt manner of presentation to be annoying and, therefore, they do not like the person. This is a risk that the speaker takes when he/she speaks bluntly.

The Gospel for this Sunday is a continuation of last Sunday's Gospel where Jesus went into the synagogue in His home town of Nazareth, read from the Book of Isaiah, and essentially told the people that He was the Messiah, the fulfillment of Isaiah's prophesy. The Jews were impressed with what He said, but then they remembered that He was the carpenter's son and doubted His words.

Jesus indicated to the assembly that, because of their lack of faith, He would not be able to perform many of the signs that He had shown in Capernaum. He also drew parallels between His situation and those of the great prophets, Elijah and Elisha. At a time when Israel was suffering greatly, Elijah was only able to help a widow from Zarephath and Elisha could only heal a leper from Syria. Both people were not Israelites but they had faith in Jesus.

Jesus delivered a blunt message to the Jews. They did not have a right to the fruits of His ministry simply because they were Jews. Their lack of faith would prevent Jesus from doing much for them. He made it clear that He was sent to serve anyone who had faith in Him. Jesus spoke the truth but, because He spoke it bluntly, the assembled people took offence and tried to throw Him off a cliff.

When someone speaks the truth directly, they risk suffering ridicule, rejection, and even physical danger. Therefore, many of us try to avoid doing this. Jeremiah was no different. God wanted him to deliver His message to the people. But Jeremiah was fearful of the consequences so he tried to avoid this mission. He told God that he was too young and that he didn't speak well enough. But God told Him that he had been chosen for this mission while he was still in the womb.

God told Jeremiah not to be afraid, to stand up, and tell the people what He told him to say. God told Jeremiah that the people would resist him but that they would not prevail over him because: *'I am with you, to deliver you.'*

How many of us are apprehensive when faced with having to speak the message of Jesus to others, especially to unbelievers? How many of us are fearful when we have been assigned a mission in the service of God? What do we fear? Just like Jeremiah, we fear rejection, ridicule, perhaps physical persecution, but, mostly, we fear failure. We are concerned that our efforts will not be successful; that our mission will be considered a failure and we will be embarrassed. It is then that we must remember the words that God told Jeremiah and take them to heart: *'I am with you, to deliver you.'*

If our mission is truly from God, and not from our own desires, then we only need to cooperate with Him and put forward our best efforts. God will take care of the success of the mission. It is not our concern.

St. Paul tells us that whatever we do, however we use our gifts, we must do so with love; otherwise, nothing good will result. Even if we have to deliver a blunt message, if we do it with love, we need only have faith in God that He will assist us by giving our message a welcome reception in the hearts and minds of our listeners.