

Twenty-third Sunday in Ordinary Time (Year A)

September 6, 2020

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You are a sentinel, listen to me. (Ezekiel 33:7-9)

If you hear the voice of the Lord today, do not harden your hearts. (Psalm 95)

As usual, I would like to take some time to talk about the first reading, describing the life and mission of the prophet Ezekiel. Although his historical context is very distant from us, both in time and place, we can find some keys to discover who are the prophets of our time: Oscar Romero, Pedro Casaldáliga, Pope Francis
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Prophet Ezekiel: his action in the history of Israel (Ezekiel 33:7-9)

Ezekiel lived at the same time as the prophet Jeremiah and became a prophet during the Babylonian exile. He was married (Ezekiel 24:18), was the son of Buzi, of priestly lineage. He was taken captive to Babylon along with King Jehoiachin of Judah along with ten thousand others destined to work in the fields (587 B.C.), and remained in a city of Mesopotamia called Tel-Abib, near Nippur in Chaldea, on the banks of the river Chebar. Five years later, at the age of thirty (Ezekiel 1:1), God called him to be a prophet, and he exercised his prophetic ministry among the exiles for 22 years until 570 B.C.

Ezekiel's role according to the Judeo-Christian tradition: sentinel

Ezekiel is a prophet from the time of the exile. He presents himself as the watchman of his people. Other prophets have also used this image to characterize their mission. The vigilant attitude is a trait of the prophets.

A prophet is to be attentive to what is happening, to alert and warn the people. He is also to be always attentive to listen to the Word of God, to read the events of history, and to interpret them in the light of the Word of God. He is a sentinel

who is aware of the dangers that lie in wait for the people. For this reason, the prophet is directly responsible for what may happen to the people. He has the mission of opening the eyes of the people. But the people can also accept or reject this prophetic interpretation.

Finally, Ezekiel has been called the "father of Judaism", for having inspired and oriented, with his priestly vision, the future of Israel: the post-exile resurrection and the subsequent existence of the Jewish people.

His language was full of symbolism and boldness. It was sometimes harsh and unacceptable, but effective with evocative power. His veneration as a saint was soon introduced into the Latin Church.

What the Babylonian Exile (586-537 B.C.) meant

Although the Babylonian Captivity is usually considered a total exile of the Hebrew people, the transfer of the population only affected the upper classes of the Jews. The conquerors of Israel had an interest in preventing the re-emergence of a strong political power there, and for that, they forcibly displaced the ruling class capable of leading a possible revolt. The small people, for their part, were not greatly affected by these forced relocations. The loss of their national independence was an enormous trauma for the Hebrews. As a psychological defense, they took the step from the old nationalist religion to the modern Judaism. They also hatched the first Messianic hopes, and believed that God was testing them to bring about a timely and miraculous change in circumstances that would bring about the restoration of Jewish independence in the end times.

Comments on St. Paul's letter and today's Gospel

This Sunday's liturgy invites us to reflect on our community co-responsibility. Faith, or more broadly, our spiritual life, is a personal matter with untransferable responsibility, but, as humans, we live it within a community. That is why we are all in some way responsible for the life of each brother of us.

Second Reading: Conversion/Metanoia (Romans 13:8-10)

Paul invites believers to build their lives on the foundation of love so that they can respond to the challenges of the historical moment that each believer and each community has to live. Love is a vital synthesis, the source of life, and a summary of every type of precept of the religious order. Thus, Paul's exhortation enters in perfect harmony with the evangelical exhortation.

Whoever loves authentically does not want to hurt anyone; on the contrary, he will always look for the way to help the other grow as a person and as a believer. The conversion is said in Greek "metanoia", which is the change of mind and heart. Whoever truly converts, assumes love as the only "norm" of life. Love is translated into very concrete attitudes and commitments: service, respect, forgiveness, reconciliation, tolerance, understanding, truth, peace, justice, and fraternal solidarity.

Gospel reading: Mutual correction (Matthew 18:15-10)

The Gospel of Matthew presents us with the "fraternal correction". Through it we can perceive the internal conflicts in the community of Matthew. They are facing a catechetical teaching on how to face and solve the problems in the community: The sin is serious not only to an individual but to the community.

It is about resolving the complicated issues in interpersonal relationships according to Jesus' teaching. It is not about being a judge on how others have acted. It is above all about saving the transgressor instead of condemning him or expelling him from the beginning. It is an educational process that tries by all means to save the person. However, if the person resists, does not accept the invitation, does not give signs of repentance ... then the community is forced to expel him from their midst. By not accepting the offer of forgiveness, the person himself is excluded from communion.

Our commitment as believers is to fight for the truth. Our Christian families must be, above all, places of reconciliation and truth. Jesus asks us to respect those who want to correct their errors. Nor is it a matter of falling into lax attitudes or

supporting impunity. Above all, the commitment to justice, truth and reconciliation is a prophetic attitude.

Prayer

- May our Christian communities work hard for reconciliation among people, practicing acceptance and forgiveness of one another. Let us pray.

- May families deepen understanding between parents and children and support harmony and reconciliation among their members. Let us pray.

- Let us end by praying the Lord's Prayer so that we may know how to recognize our mistakes and forgive one another. "Our Father who art in heaven,"

Note: All Scripture quotations, unless otherwise indicated, are taken from the New Revised Standard Version Catholic Edition (NRSVCE).