

TWENTY THIRD SUNDAY IN ORDINARY TIME,
SEPTEMBER 6, 2020

**BEING GOD'S EMISSARY. BEING GOD'S MESSENGER
WINNING OUR BROTHERS AND SISTERS OVER TO
GOD**

“You, son of man, I have appointed a watchman for the house of Israel; when you hear me say anything, you shall warn them for me” (Ezekiel 33:7).

Dear brothers and sisters, last Sunday, we dwelled on St Augustine, God's gift and model as we celebrated his feast day. Had we not chosen the readings proper to the feast, we would have had different set of readings from the twenty second Sunday of Ordinary Time. For instance, in its first reading, the prophet Jeremiah cried out in frustration and lamentation to God because he always got into trouble for proclaiming the Word of God. Yet had he refused to speak; the Word of God would burn inside him like a consuming fire that he could not hold in (Jeremiah 20:7-9). That was a dilemma. Jeremiah was between a rock and a hard place. This led Jeremiah to think that God had duped him. but God does not dupe anyone. He is the Truth that cannot deceive or be deceived. In the gospel last Sunday, Peter spoke out in an earnest effort to persuade our Lord to abandon the way of the cross because it involved suffering and death. Peter was rightly called satan. Peter was an obstacle to God's plan of salvation. Those two cases are examples of speaking out God's message on one hand and speaking out our own selfish ambitions and servile fears, on the other.

Jeremiah spoke the truth and suffering awaited him. Peter spoke in untruth and God rebuked him.

Dear brothers and sisters would you agree with me that a wise person learns from the mistake of another? We can learn from the mistakes of Peter and the mis-judgement of Jeremiah. This Sunday, the Word of God invites us to be God's spokesman for our salvation. "You, son of man, I have appointed a watchman for the house of Israel; when you hear me say anything, you shall warn them for me" (Ezekiel 33:7). What shall we do? The responsorial Psalm makes clear the way forward, "If today you hear his voice, harden not your hearts" (Psalm 95:8).

How can you know that you are God's emissary? The Lord said, "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" (Jeremiah 1:5). To be God's emissary is our native calling. In carrying out this responsibility, how do we draw the line between unnecessary meddling in another person's affairs and speaking the message of salvation? Distinguishing between the two is easy. One is self-serving, the other is selfless and God-centered. To evangelize means to share the good news with others in order to win them for Christ. To be an evangelizer is to be the sentinel that sounds the alarm when danger is afoot to save others and himself from looming danger. Failure to do this is blameworthy. The Lord says, "If, however, the sentinel sees the sword coming and does not blow the trumpet, so that the sword attacks and takes someone's life, his life will be taken for his own sin, but I will hold the

sentinel responsible for his blood” (Ezekiel 33:6). To preach and live the gospel is a duty of love laid on us. The Bible says, “If I preach the gospel, this is no reason for me to boast, for an obligation has been imposed on me, and woe to me if I do not preach it!” (1 Corinthians 9:16).

Who should be evangelized? Are there people whom the evangelizer cannot or should not share the gospel? No. Can you share it even with your parents, your grown children, your spouse or siblings? Yes. All men and women are called to partake of God’s salvation. All are beneficiaries of missionary outreach and evangelization.

Missionary activity derives its reason and power from the will of God, "who wishes all men to be saved and to come to the knowledge of the truth. For there is one God, and one mediator between God and men, Himself a man, Jesus Christ, who gave Himself as a ransom for all" (1 Tim. 2:45), "neither is there salvation in any other name but Jesus" (Acts 4:12). Therefore, all must be converted to Him, made known by the Church's preaching, and all must be incorporated into Him by baptism and into the Church which is His body. For Christ Himself "by stressing in express language the necessity of faith and baptism (cf. Mark 16:16; John 3:5), at the same time confirmed the necessity of the Church, into which men enter by baptism, as by a door. Therefore, those who cannot be saved, who though aware that God, through Jesus Christ founded the Church as something necessary, still do not wish to

enter into it, or to persevere in it."(Decree of the Missionary Activity of the Church, Ad Gentes 7, Dogmatic constitution, "Lumen Gentium" 14).

Where does the work of being God's emissary begin? It is better to begin with yourself and members of your household. To begin with yourself is to let your life reflect the gospel. It is to be a witness. This means that the Word of God shines out with luminosity in your actions and words. Actions speak louder than words! In order that your spouse, children or siblings may say not that is just your way. You need to invite them to follow God's way. Married people should help each other get to heaven by words and example.

Of critical importance is guiding our children in the way of God. We do not come out of our mother's womb canonized saints. You can see that in your own life. We need encouragement, counsel, advice, guidance and above all prayers. "Train up a child in the way he should go: and when he is old, he will not depart from it" (Proverbs 22:6). Many of us carry the heartache of grown children who left the Church and are into something else or not practicing any religion at all. What shall we do? St Monica is an example for us to follow. She talked to her son, prayed, and sought the help of those who knew better. So if you believe with all your hearts that life is in God, do what lies in your power to help family members and friends see this. Sow the seed. Remember the word of the Lord. "I charge you in the presence of God and of Christ Jesus, who will judge the living and the dead, and by his appearing and his kingly

power: proclaim the word; be persistent whether it is convenient or inconvenient; convince, reprimand, encourage through all patience and teaching” (2 Timothy 4:1-2). Sometimes you are tempted to hold back because someone has offended you. Maybe this person lied to you or stole from you. Do not ignore that person. Remember the Lord’s word. “If your brother sins against you, go and tell him his fault between you and him alone. If he listens to you, you have won over your brother. If he does not listen, take one or two others along with you, so that ‘every fact may be established on the testimony of two or three witnesses” (Matthew 18:15-17). Could it happen sometimes that you are the one at fault? You bet! At such times, listen to the Lord and words of counsel from others. Be a herald of the gospel and a witness of the goodness of the Lord. “God was reconciling the world to himself in Christ and entrusting to us the message of reconciliation” (2 Corinthians 2:19). We are God’s ambassadors. Amen.