

FOURTH SUNDAY IN ORDINARY TIME

LECTONARY #71

READING I Deuteronomy 18:15-20

A reading from the Book of Deuteronomy

Moses spoke to all the people, saying:

"A prophet like me will the LORD, your God, raise up for you from among your own kin;

to him you shall listen.

This is exactly what you requested of the LORD, your God,

at Horeb

on the day of the assembly, when you said,

'Let us not again hear the voice of the LORD, our God,

nor see this great fire any more, lest we die.'

And the LORD said to me, 'This was well said.

I will raise up for them a prophet like you from among their kin,

and will put my words into his mouth;

he shall tell them all that I command him.

Whoever will not listen to my words which he speaks

in my name,

I myself will make him answer for it.

But if a prophet presumes to speak in my name

and an oracle that I have not commanded him to speak,

or speaks in the name of other gods, he shall die."

Deuteronomy = dōō-ter-AH-nuh-mee or dyōō-ter-AH-nuh-mee

As you begin, notice the numerous

quotations. Help the assembly understand

who is speaking.

Horeb = HOHR-eb

The Lord approves of the sense of reverence

the people have for the divine. Convey

a sense of pride and satisfaction.

The reading concludes with two stern

warnings: one for the prophet and one

for the listener.

READING I

In today's first reading, we hear of the promise of a prophet-like-Moses who will come to lead the people. In the gospels, Jesus is identified as the promised prophet-like-Moses. While Moses' prophetic role is highlighted in this reading, Moses is never called a prophet in any of the books of the Pentateuch. This is the closest he comes to that designation, and here his prophetic role is described as an intermediary between God and God's people. Moses reminds the people that they requested the establishment of this role because they feared direct interac-

tions with God (see Deuteronomy 5:22-27). Today's reading emphasizes the establishment of a permanent channel of communication between God and his people. It describes how prophets will act and how they communicate the message of God. God's promise, "[I] will put my words into his [the prophet-like-Moses'] mouth," affirms the prophet as God's spokesperson and envoy. The prophets are chosen by God and are given his words to speak. They should only speak God's word to the people. However, this reading also warns against two types of false prophecy. First, this role because they feared direct interac-

we see that there can be false oracles presented by the prophet as God's words. Second, false prophets might proclaim oracles from other gods. God will condemn both types. Additionally, those who do not heed the prophet when he conveys God's words will answer to God himself.

This reading from Deuteronomy assures us of God's continual efforts to communicate with us and his commitment to ensuring that his message arrives to us without distortion. For our part, we need to listen to God's words, especially those communicated through and in Jesus Christ.

For meditation and context:

RESPONSORIAL PSALM Psalm 95:1-2, 6-7, 7-9 (8)

R. If today you hear his voice, harden not your hearts.
 Come, let us sing joyfully to the LORD;
 For he is our God,
 let us acclaim the rock of our salvation.
 Let us come into his presence
 with thanksgiving;
 let us joyfully sing psalms to him.
 Come, let us bow down in worship;
 let us kneel before the LORD who made us.
 "Harden not your hearts as at Meribah,
 as in the day of Massah in the desert,
 where your fathers tempted me;
 they tested me though they had seen
 my works."

READING II 1 Corinthians 7:32-35

A reading from the first Letter of Saint Paul to the Corinthians

Brothers and sisters: I should like you to be free of anxieties.

An unmarried man is anxious about the things of the Lord, how he may please the Lord.

But a married man is anxious about the things of the world, how he may please his wife, and he is divided.

An unmarried woman or a virgin is anxious about the things of the Lord,

so that she may be holy in both body and spirit. A married woman, on the other hand,

is anxious about the things of the world, how she may please her husband.

I am telling you this for your own benefit, not to impose a restraint upon you,

but for the sake of propriety

and adherence to the Lord without distraction.

In this passage, Paul expresses a preference for the celibate life, not because he believes it is the only possible state of life for Christians, but because he sees it as more conducive to being free from the cares of the world and its values. It is true that married couples ought to pay attention to the needs of their spouse and, if they have any, their children. We should keep in mind that Paul is not saying that married life is inferior or that married couples are not as holy. This would contradict Paul's words earlier in the letter when he says that every believer is the temple of the Holy Spirit.

Paul's overarching concern is to mitigate anxieties. Many early Christians believed that the Lord's return was imminent. What advice could he offer the people of Corinth? Subdue "unmarried" and "married" to reflect the more important theological message that we all need to stay focused on the Lord no matter our vocational status.

Paul's tone softens as he explains the reasoning behind his teaching.

READING II

The Word of God made flesh, and integrate them into our lives.

Paul's concerns for freedom from anxiety motivates his words in today's second reading. For Paul, anxiety takes our attention away from prayer and service to the Church. With these words, Paul reflects on the ways the social situations and commitments according to a person's state of life may pull him or her away from devoting time to God. However, even those who have more flexibility of time do not always use their time in this way.

GOSPEL Mark 1:21-28

A reading from the holy Gospel according to Mark

Then they came to Capernaum, and on the sabbath Jesus entered the synagogue and taught. The people were astonished at his teaching, for he taught them as one having authority and not as the scribes.

In their synagogue was a man with an unclean spirit; he cried out, "What have you to do with us, Jesus of Nazareth? Have you come to destroy us? I know who you are—the Holy One of God!"

Jesus rebuked him and said, "Quiet! Come out of him!"

The unclean spirit convulsed him and with a loud cry came out of him.

All were amazed and asked one another, "What is this? A new teaching with authority. He commands even the unclean spirits and they obey him." His fame spread everywhere throughout the whole region of Galilee.

ness of Jesus and the uncleanness (meaning "unholiness") of the spirit. "Holiness" here is not a moral designation but refers to "sacred," set apart by and for God. The demon recognizes Jesus' holiness and becomes defensive in response, revealing special knowledge about Jesus, which is why Jesus rebukes him. Jesus casts out the demon by the power of his word alone. Once again, Jesus reveals himself as the prophet-like-Moses whose authority to teach and exorcise has a divine source. In Jesus, God continues to communicate him-

self to his people by giving to us the Word of God incarnate.

Today's Gospel invites us to recognize Jesus' power and authority. Because Jesus is the fullness of God's message to us, we need to be attuned to how Jesus communicates himself to us on a continual basis: through Scripture, by the actions and words of those around us, and most especially, in the Eucharist. M.B.

This passage from Mark's Gospel picks up where we left off in last Sunday's reading. The disciples travel with Jesus to Capernaum, the center of Jesus' Galilean ministry. There they witness Jesus' power and authority, providing a basis for their following Jesus. In fact, Jesus' authority is such that it surpasses that of the scribes, the experts on the Law. We are reminded of the promised prophet-like-Moses from the first reading, who conveys God's words with authority. The exorcism account in this passage highlights the distinction between the holi-

GOSPEL

Capernaum = kuh-PER-nee-^{*}m or kuh-PER-n^{*}m
 Emphasize "not as the scribes"; this is surprising. The scribes were viewed by the people as experts and teachers of the Jewish law.

The authoritative nature of Jesus bookends the reading.

"Rebuke" is a strong word. Jesus' performative language should be commanding.

Imagine yourself witnessing an exorcism. Bring that amazement to the reaction of the crowd.