

Brothers and sisters, today's readings remind us that we are called by God to be his **prophet** like Jeremiah. Through our baptism, all Christians are called to become **priest, prophet and king**. However, we cannot succeed in this calling without loving God and our neighbors. In spite of our weakness, love must motivate us to continue. The focus of today's first reading is principally on a call to action, and to proclaim the good news to all the nations. This call is both an important and a privilege given to us by God. Almost all the people called see themselves unfit for the task and so Jeremiah tries to refuse his call by saying: "**I do not know how to speak**" (Jer.1:6). On the other hand, God promises to provide the strength and protection that he needs to accomplish his call: "**I for my own part today will make you into a fortified city, a pillar of iron, and a wall of bronze to confront all these land**" (Jer.1:19). These words simply show that the call to this prophetic ministry is not solely our business. Rather, it is a collaborative ministry between God and us. We make ourselves available, while God provides the strength and protection we need to succeed in our mission.

In the first reading, God called Jeremiah to become his prophet before his birth; God told him: I knew you; I love you and chose you. I dedicated you; I set you apart to be a prophet (Jer.1:5). Like Jeremiah, God did not call us by accident; rather, He knew each one of us personally and still knows us now very well. Besides, God knows what he wants us to do for him. Hence, He calls us by our personal names and reminds us: "*Before I formed you in the womb I knew you; before you came to birth I consecrated you; I have appointed you as the prophet of the nations*". This means that we are not strangers to God and His call. He does not call strangers to his mission, but those he knows personally.

Paul, in our second reading, reminds us that the driving force of our prophetic mission must be the theological virtues: Love, Faith and Hope. Faith in God sustains us in our prophetic ministry, in spite of the obstacles we encounter. Also, hope in a bright future motivates us to remain focused, and to believe that our efforts will not be in vain. A prophet or Christian who has these virtues will succeed in his ministry. As St. Paul encourages us to strive eagerly for the greatest spiritual gifts. Because if we speak in human and angelic tongues, but do not have love, we are a resounding gong or a clashing cymbal. Love is patient, love is kind. Love is not jealous, it is not pompous, it is not inflated, it is not rude, it does not seek its own interests, it is not quick-tempered, it does not brood over injury, it does not rejoice over wrongdoing, but rejoices with the truth. It bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, endures all things. Love never fails. Therefore, faith, hope and love remain, these three; but the greatest of these is love (1Cor.13:1-8;13).

Jesus Christ, also in the Gospel, demonstrated prophetic love. Therefore, it was not difficult for him to win the approval of the people: "**...He won the approval of all and they were astonished by the gracious words that came from his lips (Lk.4:22)**". Without these gracious words motivated by love for the salvation of the people, all his efforts would have been in vain. It is also important to point out that life is not always easy for a true prophet. He faces oppositions, persecutions, castigations, rejections, and even threats to his life. Notwithstanding, all these, Christ did not relent; instead, he continued to cherish God's call. Like Christ, we must continue to love and cherish the people, while remaining faithful to God who called us. As those called to be prophets and missionaries, we must be committed to the good news. According St. Cyril of Alexandria, those who heard Jesus speak treated his words as worthless. I think the same happens today. When we hear words pleasing to us, we accept them, but when they disturb our consciences, we might well dismiss them as worthless.

Finally, dear friends, I wish to end with the quotation from Saint Augustine of Hippo: "**Love and do whatever you want to do.**" This simply means that love is the greatest and most important of these virtues. If love is not at the base of our mission, all our efforts might be in vain. A prophet who lacks love for God, the good news, and for the people his call to prophesy is *a clashing cymbal*. May God give us grace to love in words and indeed so that we can evangelized through our way of life. Let us strive to Love so that we can fulfil our baptismal ministry successfully. Amen!