

Go Forth...

A SERVICE OF U.S. CATHOLIC MISSION ASSOCIATION

MISSIONARY COMMENTARY

HANDLING HATRED

SUNDAY READINGS:

Jeremiah 20:10-13

Psalms 69:8-10, 17, 33-35

Romans 5:12-15

Matthew 10:26-33

COMMENTARY

One of the youth leaders of our parish in western Santiago, Chile, was clever and much loved for his sense of humor, a refreshing contrast to the stifling fear of the times, under a dictatorship.

His name was Juanito, a scrappy, fast-talking and thin young man who always seemed to get targeted by the police and their allies, the plainclothes secret police and their spies, staying just a step ahead of arrest and torture—a common danger in our working-class neighborhood under the Pinochet dictatorship. With a ready smile and quick wit, all the parish young people admired him, and he loved serving the Catholic Church in his role.

Juanito already understood that being a follower of Christ meant dealing with fear on a regular basis, as Jesus tells us three times today (“Do not be afraid!”). Juanito was used to fear, and entrusted it to our Lord if faced with a conflictive situation—situations that he often skillfully addressed with a serpentine wisdom and dove-like innocence that Jesus valued (Mt 10:16), and that Jesus’ ancestor, the young David, possessed (1 Sam 24). Jeremiah describes the support he felt from God while carrying out his prophetic role amid mockery and isolation, in our first reading.

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Juanito introduced me, while we worked together to buy food for a summer youth retreat on the coast, to an older man he had just met, working at one of the large marketplaces in the city's center. The man exhibited the deep wisdom and sense of humor of the Chilean people.

May we be open to learn like Juanito, from the wise and the holy who may have no degrees or credentials to their name, but bring others encouragement and wisdom, and value the Good News that Jesus offers to those under oppression and want.



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NOTES ON THE SUNDAY READINGS:

First Reading: Jeremiah 20:10-13

The much-maligned and ridiculed prophet laments his isolation while announcing the coming wars as punishments for his people's deviations from the Law of Moses, but he finds a source of confidence and joy in God's preferential love for the poor and persecuted.

Responsorial Psalm: Psalm 69:8-10, 17, 33-35

These verses echo our first reading, and are taken from an individual lament, in which the psalmist, unjustly accused of theft, appeals to God for justice.

Second Reading: Romans 5:12-15

Writing to the Christian community in Rome, composed of both Jewish and Gentile Christians, Paul here develops the similarities and differences between Adam's sin and Christ's sacrifice, focusing on the consequences for all humanity.

Gospel: Matthew 10:26-33

"Do not be afraid" is repeated three times in today's reading, connected to sayings that experts believe started as small units, and were later used by both Matthew and Luke (see Lk 12:2-9) in their particular situations, revealing a line of thinking about being a follower of Jesus that endures today—people who frequently face conflict and hostility.

Notes and Commentary by by Fr. Bob Mosher,
a member of the Missionary Society of Saint Columban.

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