

Homily Reflections - Ordination of Bishop Rozanski

(Jeremiah 1:4-9) Very often, ordination classes choose as a first reading the words of the Prophet Jeremiah Bishop Rozanski selected for the reading today. More frequently, however, the complaint of Jeremiah, “I am too young,” rings hollow. We have to put it into a context.

For Jeremiah and for Bishop Rozanski the context is not simply a matter of physical age. It is the realization that the bishop’s calling, like that of the prophet, is life changing, with the potential of being profoundly unsettling. The protest, “I am too young,” bespeaks an unwillingness to allow one’s life to unfold in the Lord’s ways. Yet God responds not with rejection, but with patient assurance, “See, I place my words in your mouth!”

For Bishop Mitch, the life-changing call of God came in the context of his family. His parents welcomed the presence of the divine into their household; he grew up with parents and relatives who love God and His Church. Their example and the teaching and example of school, seminary and parish leaders led to a close relationship with God that brought the maturity, a maturity that enabled him to say “yes” to the Lord’s calling expressed through the Holy Father’s invitation.

From Jeremiah’s own words, we know a great deal about his ministry as a prophet. With his people, God’s people, he endured the fortunes and misfortunes that befell them. He offered them hope in despair and reminded them of the joy to be found in living out their covenant with God. Our new bishop is called to a similar task, to preach the word of God “in season and out of season,” to those ready to listen to the message and to those who have closed their hearts to it. Our prayer today is that he walk in the ways of Jeremiah and of St. Matthew, who were always faithful to their prophetic calling.

(Revelation 21:9b-14) The second and third readings are those the Church assigns for this feast of St. Bartholomew. In each reading there is a mention of a guide, an angel and then Philip. The angel leads the author of the Book of Revelation to a

vision of the heavenly Jerusalem.

During the Second Vatican Council, in their clarifying discussion on the nature of the Church, I remember how the bishops turned to this passage from Revelation as they spoke of their own responsibilities as a body succeeding the body of the Apostles in their mission of preaching the gospel. "The wall of the city had twelve courses of stones as its foundation, on which were inscribed the twelve names of the twelve Apostles of the Lamb." (Rev. 21:14) Even as Peter, the Rock upon which Jesus would build his Church, has an irreplaceable role in the Church, so also do the other Apostles, who, with Peter and never without him, would together be the foundation upon which the Lord wished his Church to rise.

This reading extols the beauty of the heavenly Jerusalem: "He took me in spirit to a great, high mountain and showed me the holy city Jerusalem coming down out of heaven from God. It gleamed with the splendor of God. Its radiance was like that of a precious stone, like jasper, clear as crystal." What joy that passage brought to its early listeners, members of a Church of martyrs, of sufferers for their faith. We may not suffer physically, as they were called to do, but we do know that the call to be a faithful follower of Jesus is not an easy one to heed.

We face the challenges of living a Christian life today, in the midst of a society often deaf to the Gospel message and its values. These challenges occasion daily martyrdoms, opportunities for witness, as we make our decisions following in the footsteps of Jesus. How good it is for us to be reminded today that at the end of suffering, beyond the cross and tomb, there is the heavenly Jerusalem, with the abundant gifts of risen life and the joy of sharing in it.

It is not an angel but another human being, Philip, who brings Nathanael, or Bartholomew, to Jesus. Jesus shows us h