

15th SUNDAY IN ORDINARY TIME; Cycle – A; July 16th 2023
Isaiah 55: 10-11; Romans 8: 18-23; Matthew 13: 1-23

Dear Sisters and Brothers,

It is roughly estimated that an average person speaks less than 10000 words a day which include all sorts of subjects. But it is also said that out of them only 500-700 words are of some value or effect. The entire Bible is known as the Word of God; where God speaks directly as well as speaks through the Prophets. First of all, God does not engage in useless talks and His Words don't go in waste rather each Word brings the maximum fruits or effect. The Book of Genesis is the best example of the effectiveness of God's Word. During the process of creating the Universe and everything on earth God just says **"Let there be ...seven times** and the earth was fully decorated for living. Only to create man God had to work a little. You can imagine then, the power and effectiveness of the Word of God. In the entire Salvation History, starting from Abraham down to the Prophets we have ample evidences of the power of the Word of God.

In today's first reading God explains through Prophet Isaiah, how effective His Word is. God says, *"My word shall not return to me void but shall do my will, achieves the end from which I sent it."* God was speaking to His people who were in Babylonian exile and promising them the freedom. Eventually it happened as God said. In the Book of Jeremiah 23:29 God asks the Prophet who was stressed out, **"Is not my word like fire, like a hammer shattering rocks?** In short, when God utters a Word mighty things happen on earth.

As St. John writes in the very beginning of his gospel, Jesus is the very Word of God and through him alone everything was created. So naturally Jesus too worked most of his miracles just uttering the Words. Let us see a few examples which show the power of the Word of God working through Jesus. Only on a few occasions we see him performing some sort of rituals to work a miracle. According to Luke chapter 5, Simon Peter and companions were washing the net after a fruitless night of fishing. But in obedience to the word of Jesus they cast the net again and caught large amount of fish. But then came, the command of Jesus, **"Follow me."** Luke says, **"When they brought their boats to the shore, they left everything and followed him"** (Luke. 5:11). They simply bowed before the powerful word of Jesus. The money oriented tax collector Matthew left his tax office, yielding to the powerful command of Jesus, *"Follow me."* On the way to Damascus, the word of Jesus came down upon Saul the persecutor of the Church, *"Saul, Saul, why are you persecuting me? (Acts 9:4)*, Saul fell on the ground and thus he became St. Paul the great apostle. Francis Xavier, the ambitious philosophy professor heard the word of Jesus through Ignatius of Loyola, *"What profit would there*

be for one to gain the whole world and forfeit his life?" (Mt. 16:26). Though initially he ignored it, finally it shook his heart and the young Francis left everything and became a great missionary in India. While traveling from Calcutta to Darjeeling, the simple Loreto nun Mother Theresa heard the voice of Jesus, *"Go back to Calcutta and serve me there."* She simply landed in the slums of Calcutta single handed. We can find number of such examples to show how powerful and effective the Word of God can be.

In the letter to the Hebrews the author speaks about the power of the Word of God, "Indeed the word of God is living and effective, sharper than any double-edged sword, piercing even between soul and spirit, joints and marrow, and able to discern reflections and thoughts of the heart" (Heb. 4:12). As the disciples of Jesus we have ample opportunity to have access to the Word of God. Even though we have our Bible at home, we Catholics have to admit that we are poor in reading the Word of God and we underestimate its power. It is said that almost 80% of American families have more than one Bible at home; but very safely kept in the shelf. Nobody bothers to take and read a few verses from it.

The Bible is not meant for casual reading. We have to read it reflectively with full attention. Nowhere in the Bible it is said that we have to read the entire Bible in one year. How can we read the Bible effectively? First of all we have to choose to read the Bible with faith. The Word of God without being combined with faith will not have any effect in us. In Hebrews 4: 2, the author says, **"For in fact we have received the good news just as they did. But the word they heard did not profit them, for they were not united in faith."** So it is clear that if we simply read the Bible without faith, it is going to be a waste of time. Secondly we must choose to act on the word of God to make it effective. In James 1: 22 we read, **"Be doers of the word and not hearers only, deluding yourselves."** In Matthew 7:24 Jesus says, **"Everyone who listens to these words of mine will be like a wise man who built his house on rock. And everyone who listens to the words of mine but does not act on them will be like a fool who built his house on sand."** The sad fate of Israel was that they heard the word of God through prophets, but did not act on them at all. So they collapsed. It is my request to you, please take your Bible and remove the dust off and start reading daily, may be 2 minutes, 10 minutes or 30 minutes. But read it with faith and let it work in you effectively. You will see definitely change in your life.