

29th SUNDAY IN ORDINARY TIME; Cycle – A; Oct. 22nd 2023
Isaiah 45:1, 4-6; 1Thessalonians 1:1-5; Matthew 22:15-21

Dear Sisters & Brothers,

In the Book of Isaiah 55:8 God says, “*My thoughts are not your thoughts, nor are your ways my ways.*” God also says to Prophet Samuel, “*Not as man sees does God see, because man sees the appearance but the Lord looks into the heart*” (1Samuel 16:7). The way God chooses to complete a task is very often strange and unimaginable for man. We have a clear example of the same in today’s first reading.

As we have heard in the first reading, an unusual incident which happened in the Babylonian exile where people of Israel spent almost 70 years. It is interesting to notice the strange way of God. For the repeated sins of infidelity God handed Israel to the exiles. But in Babylon God used Cyrus the Great, the founder of the Persian Empire (*modern day Iran*) to conquer Babylon first and then to free Israel. By this time, people had already lost their hope of freedom and never expected anything better with the change of regime. For, Cyrus too was a pagan king who didn’t know anything about the God of Israel. But God was using Cyrus an instrument in His hands to free his people from the bondage. Thus, Cyrus let the Jews go back to their native land and he helped them to rebuild Jerusalem city and the Temple. God makes it very clear to Isaiah that Cyrus was the instrument in His hands and he anointed him and handed Babylon to his power. God calls Cyrus, ‘**the anointed one.**’ Remember, this title is given in the New Testament only to the ‘*Messiah*’ and in the Old Testament it is reserved only to the kings of the Davidic origin. And this is the only occasion we come across in the Bible a pagan king who is the enemy of the true God being given this Messianic title. This call of Cyrus is a clear example that God can choose any one whenever He wants to accomplish something, no matter he/she is a non-believer or non-Christian, weak or strong. Once the person is chosen, it is God who makes him/her the fittest instrument in his hands.

If we go through the salvation history we know that God always acted in a strange way in choosing people for his mission. Starting from Abraham down to this very day God always chose unexpected or least expected people. We have number of concrete examples. For instance, Moses who ran away from the wrath of Pharaoh was sent back to him by God to deliver his people; David, the great king was a shepherd boy; many of the Prophets were not outstanding figures in Israel, before they were chosen. Jesus chose the least or the outcaste as his 12 apostles; he

selected Paul, the persecutor of the Christians and made him a great apostle to the gentiles. The young ambitious philosophy professor, Francis Xavier was chosen by God to be a great missionary to India. Mel Gibson, the one who made the famous movie **the Passion of Christ**, had the only intention to make some money. But after the movie was released many miracles happened. Even beyond Gibson's expectation it became world famous. First of all, some of his actors were not believers and a few were agnostic. But they all became good Christians, including a Muslim technician. Many who watched the movie were converted. See, how Jesus chose Mel Gibson and made him a good evangelizer, though he didn't intend. Anyhow Gibson also made a profit of 370 million dollars out of this movie.

The Almighty God, if wanted, could have made a direct intervention and free his people from the Babylonian captivity. But he looked for the help of a human being, who was only a creature of His hands, to do the job. Does God really require the help of the human beings to do His work? Please listen to the words of St. Teresa of Avila whose feast falls on Oct. 15th; she says in one of her books, **“Christ has no body now on earth but yours; no hands but yours; no feet but yours. Yours are the eyes through which he looks at people with compassion; yours are the feet with which he is to go about doing good; yours is the hands with which he is to bless people now.”**

Remember, at our Baptism you and I were anointed to do a particular mission for God. We all have got something to accomplish in the world for God. Very often people make excuses that they are incapable of doing anything big to the community. So, many people confine themselves to their little world of self-interest. But God does not count how big a thing we can do rather, He counts how willing we are to do something for Him. God does not look for our talents or qualification; rather what he needs is our goodwill and cooperation. Please remember, we are all different types of instruments in the hands of God and we all can do something. We can make a difference in the community by our good deeds. We should not wait for big things to do, rather, as St. Mother Theresa says, “Most of us are not called to do big things; but we all can do small things with great love.” Yes, Mother Theresa started her mission in a small scale. But God made it very big. *In the words of Edward Everett Hale, the American historian, “I am only one, but I am one. I cannot do everything, but I can do something. And I will not let what I cannot do interfere with what I can do.”*