

Points to Help Homily Preparation from a JPIC Perspective

Readings of the 4th Sunday of Ordinary Time - Sunday, February 1, 2009

Dt 18:15-20

1 Cor 7:32:35

Mk 1:21-28

Today we begin Black History Month. This yearly commemoration calls the country to remember the great gifts which Afro-Americans have brought to our nation as well as the enormous suffering they endured to achieve civil rights here.

With the election and inauguration as president of Barak Obama, Black History Month takes on immense significance this year. We have achieved a milestone that we could not have imagined just a generation ago. Our Afro-American sisters and brothers and all who value liberty and justice for all rightly take great pleasure in this historic event.

At the same time, today's readings from the Hebrew Scriptures and from the Gospel of Mark remind us of the ongoing prophetic vocation which derives from our Baptism into Christ. In the passage from Deuteronomy read today God promises to raise up a prophet (Jesus), who will speak in God's own name. And in Mark's Gospel we have Jesus actually fulfilling that promise bringing "a new teaching with authority."

In this time of Salvation History, it is we who are called to carry on the prophetic tradition highlighted in today's Scriptures. We must be the ones to "speak truth to power" whenever and wherever we have the opportunity. This challenge seems particularly incumbent on American faith communities as we witness the unfolding of a new presidency at a time when our country is engaged in two wars, where many, especially the poor, feel the effects of economic hardship, and where we have used illegal and inhuman measures against supposed enemies in places like Guantanamo and Abu Grehb.

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