

Let us not judge the messenger but the message – We are on a mission

By Lesego Zikhali

Dear Youth,

What is the aim and purpose of your life? Are you ambitious about education that you may have a name and position in the world? Have you thoughts that you dare not express, that you may one day stand upon the summit of intellectual greatness; that you may sit in deliberative and legislative councils, and help to enact laws for the nation? There is nothing wrong with these aspirations. You may – every one of you – make your mark. You should be content with no mean attainments. Aim high, and spare no pains to reach the standard.

The Spirit which entered into the prophet Ezekiel and set him up on his feet... he realises that it was God speaking to him, sending him out on a mission. He says that God said that he should declare to the Israelites, a nation of rebels who are impudent and stubborn, that 'Thus says the Lord'. God knew that the Israelites were stubborn and rebellious but he still sent Ezekiel to prophecy to them. This goes to show that God's ways are not our ways. He is able to see behind the masks that we wear, even stubbornness, arrogance and rebelliousness. He can see beyond our pretence. He sees what lies deep in the depths of our hearts. We can fool everyone but we cannot fool God. For though we may in our pride rebel against him, he continues to show us compassion and mercy. This explains why he continues to send his messengers to remind us who God is and how we should behave towards him.

God reminds us that we should not be proud when he chooses us for a special task. St Paul says that he was given 'a thorn in the flesh' to stop him from being elated. He realises that this thorn in the flesh helped him to rely solely on the grace of God, the power of God, rather than on his own strength. St Paul speaks to the Corinthians warning them that it is so easy to be puffed up when we seem to be performing great works for the Lord. We should know that it is through God's grace that we perform all great deeds. Remember that God is the one who helps us to do amazing things as the Youth Executive, Youth Mentor, Youth Structure in the parish, Youth Sodality chairperson, choir conductor, and so forth. He gives us the wisdom, knowledge and the abilities to perform our tasks. So we should be humble. We should see that his power is what sustains us. It is his grace that keeps us. For all of us have fallen short of the glory of God, but he chooses to overlook our weaknesses. He makes our weaknesses our strengths. Our attitude as messengers of the Good News should be one of humility and submission to his divine will for our lives. For our praises, prayers and works add nothing to God's grace. Let us be true evangelisers who spread the Good News of salvation to others. We should stop preaching ourselves to others but preach God. For sometimes pride makes us to preach ourselves at the expense of preaching the message of Christ. Let us ask ourselves, are we messengers of the Good News? If so which Good News are we preaching, the Good News of Christ or the Good News of so and so?

The Gospel according to St Mark tells us that when you are an evangeliser you shall often face rejection. Sometimes people will welcome you, but most often they will reject you. Jesus knew this. He says today to us, 'A prophet is not without honour, except in his own country,

and among his own kin, and his own house.' So when you preach to your friends, neighbours and family members and they do not listen to you, do not be surprised. Jesus himself was rejected by his own countrymen. He was persecuted for preaching the Good News. What we should ask ourselves is, do we criticise and undermine others in our parish because we know where they come from? Do we jeer, mock and belittle them when they try to be active in the church, since we know their background? We say "what good can come from that family... he is a son of a taxi driver, drunkard, loafer, what can he tell us"? The Gospel urges not to judge the messenger but to judge the message. Let us use our *sense* to discern the truth of the message. Let us stop judging people based on their backgrounds. God sometimes chooses those we undermine to speak to us. He sometimes chooses those we have already condemned as his prophets to communicate to us. Please, let us not reject the message of God because we reject the messenger. The Jews rejected the message of salvation because they believed 'a son of carpenter' could not talk to them about salvation. Let us not reject the Good News because those who preach to us do not live up to our expectations of who should preach to us.