

JULY 15 2025 FATHER JOHN BERTAIO

Some of us preachers, especially me included, we take it for granted that some of us are familiar with certain words used in the translation of Holy Scripture, or the Bible.

For example, today's Gospel, and I quote:

"Jesus began to reproach the cities in which most of the deeds of power had been done, because they did not repent."

For clarification, for those who are not too familiar with the word "reproach," the word can mean "reprimand" or "rebuke," just to name a few. They all mean to criticize adversely, even to suggest great displeasure.

Now that we've cleared that up, if Jesus were to visit your community, what would he see or say? Would he issue a warning, like the one he gave to Chorazin and Bethsaida? And how would you respond?

Wherever Jesus went, he did great, mighty deeds to show the people how much God loves them. Chorazin and Bethsaida had been blessed with the vision of God. They heard the Good News and experienced the wonderful works which Jesus had done for them.

So, why was Jesus upset with these communities?

Another word to keep in mind is "woe." We sometimes hear people saying that word. It can mean "stop." In the Bible, it can also mean misfortune, distress, sorrow, sadness, misery, grief, and so on. It is as much an expression of sorrow, pity, and grief as it is of dismay over the calamity and destruction which come as a result of human folly, sin, and ignorance.

Why does Jesus lament and issue a stern warning? People who heard the Gospel very likely responded with great indifference. Jesus scolds them for doing nothing to change their way of life.

Repentance demands change. Change of the heart. Change of the way of life. Change of the way we do things.

God's works are life-giving, and they save us from destruction of heart, destruction of mind, destruction of negative or poor attitudes, as well as soul and body. Jesus' anger is directed towards sin and everything which hinders us from doing God's will, and God's will alone.

In great love, he calls us to walk in his way of truth and freedom. Of course, also to walk in his grace, mercy, justice, and holiness. Because he is always right.

Speaking of right, let's take today's saint for example, whose memorial we celebrate — Saint Bonaventure, whose name in Italian means "good fortune" (buona fortuna). He was a friend of Saint Thomas Aquinas. He told Saint Thomas that he got his spiritual ideas from the crucifix, the large crucifix he had on his desk.

He stated, and I quote, "It is he, Jesus, on the cross, who tells me everything." And he says, "Jesus is my teacher." What a beautiful saying.

His heart was on Christ, who wants all of us to be saved and help others to do the same. That is called conversion. To Christ, always for Christ.

It can start in our own home, in our own lives. For example: Do you have a crucifix in your home? Please, don't take offence to this — but not as a decoration, rather as a great sign of love. A great sign of surrender. A great sign of how much God loves us.

It can be a reminder, such as: Am I doing or following God's will in my life? In other words, do you receive his words with faith and obedience?

Do you share God's word with others, in your circle of friends? Or, and I thought about this but I will share it with you, how about a family member who is not living a faithful life, as we see so many do in our communities?

Such as living together outside of the sacrament of holy matrimony. As difficult as it may seem, it may jeopardize your relationship with those two people. But then again, how will it increase your relationship with Jesus Christ?

After all, yes, it's good to be in harmony with family. But who do you want to spend eternity with? Family is here, and that's a good thing. I don't ignore that, and I don't put that down. But it's always good to speak the truth, as Saint Bonaventure tells us to do.

So please, always, always speak the truth in the name of Christ.

And let's finish with a prayer from Saint Francis:

Most high and glorious God, enlighten the darkness of our hearts, and give us, through faith, a certain hope and perfect love. Give us a sense of divine knowledge of yourself so that we may do everything in fulfilment of your holy will.

Through Christ our Lord. Amen.