

## FOURTH SUNDAY IN ORDINARY TIME

January 31, 2021

The readings of today invite us to listen to the true voice of the Lord with open hearts and to recognize the authority of Jesus and His teachings.

In the first reading, we see that prophets are called to relay God's message to the people. However, our world today has so many false prophets. There are those who sow misinformation and spread lies. There are also those who claim worthy causes but are more interested in profit. These make listening to God a very difficult challenge.

In the Gospel, Jesus frees a man who was tormented by an unclean spirit. But we also have other unclean spirits. Pride consumes us, so does envy, lust and greed. Some of us are possessed by hatred and obsessed in manipulating facts to benefit our desire. Moreover, a lot of us cry out for racial equality but our actions do not reflect what we say or desire.

Jesus can free us from all these unclean spirits as well — but only insofar as we commit ourselves to doing whatever is necessary to stay free once Jesus has done his part. Unfortunately, many people don't really want to be free. I know of alcoholics who say they want to quit but won't go to their AA meetings.

Our world needs to be cleansed from the coronavirus, our nation needs unity amid a huge political divide, people need to be freed from unemployment and America needs Jesus to cast out white supremacy.

Reiterating the call for all today, the responsorial psalm asks us: "If today you hear His voice, harden not your hearts."