

Fr. Romeo Homily
January 27, 2019
3rd Sunday Ordinary Time (C)

Today's Gospel is the beginning of the Gospel of Luke. Luke explicitly states that he dedicated this Gospel to a certain individual named Theophilus: "Since I myself have carefully investigated everything from the beginning, I too decided to write an orderly account for you, most excellent Theophilus, so that you may know the certainty of the things you have been taught".

There have been many theories as to the identity and work of this man but that is not the point of this reflection. I focus on the meaning of the name Theophilus. The name is a combination of two Greek words: Theo, meaning God and Phileo, meaning Love. The name Theophilus means lover of God or one who loves God.

Whether Theophilus is an actual person or a fictitious character, I propose that Luke wrote the Gospel for this purpose for those who love God or to make us fall in love with God in Jesus Christ. Even the whole of scripture was written for this purpose, for the human being to fall in love with God. The Bible is the greatest love story ever told. So when we read the Bible, the purpose is not only about knowing God but knowing how God truly loves all of us, especially through our Lord Jesus Christ. Jesus is the fulfillment of the law, history, and the prophets. He is the fulfillment of the covenant and the love of God.

What does this mean for me, a priest who preaches the word of God? It means the aim of my preaching is not to make people fall in love with my person. It means not to allow my insecurity and my need for affirmation to get in the way of proclaiming the message of Jesus. The more people see less of myself, the more Jesus will shine for them. As a priest, my primary role is to lead people to fall in love with God. And to do that is not enough to preach about His words, but to live with it all throughout my life. The greatest preaching of God's words happened not at this Ambo, but in our daily lives. How we treat each other with love and compassion.

Example my own experience as a young priest.....

That was the first time I've realized what real preaching is all about. It is said that some people are so in love with God that they do not need to preach. They just exist and their existence is better than the best sermon.

This could be true to each and every one of us, our lives are the best sermon we can preach to others. Pope Francis once counseled that Christians should read the scripture not only as an academic exercise, but always in a spirit of "awe and wonder". This "awe and wonder" is what leads all of us to fall in love with God.

It is said that when you like a flower, you take it. When you love a flower, you water it. Like a Theophilus – a lover of God – let us read the word of God as one who loves a flower. We behold its beauty, we open ourselves to its captivating power and allow its grandeur to draw us in. When we do that, Jesus' declaration at the end of today's Gospel will be realized: "The scripture will be fulfilled in our hearing".