



AJRS 64/6 Nov-Dec 2019, P-ISSN 2249 –1503 13-16

DOI:10.5281/zenodo.4274887

Stable URL: <http://doi.org/10.5281/zenodo.4274887>

AUC: Asian Journal of Religious Studies

St. John Marie Vianney: The Voice of God

Malcolm Sequeira

Vicar General, Diocese of Poona

With great joy today we celebrate the feast of St. John Marie Vianney, the patron of clergy. The theme chosen for this Holy Eucharist is : The Voice of God. This theme arises strongly from both the Mass readings as well as through the life of St. John Vianney.

The first thought came to my mind was, “does God have a voice?” followed by another question, “Do I hear the voice of God?” immediately I remembered what the Psalmist wrote 4,000 years ago, “The voice of God is powerful, the voice of God is full of majesty”.

The scripture writers saw God’s active voice in everything ... metaphorically in wonders of creation; echoing over the ocean, God’s voice in thundering and lightening, in earthquakes and even in falling of leaves. And literally speaking, God’s voice is in conversation with Noah about the ark, to Abraham telling him that he will be the father of many nations, to Moses in the burning bush, voice of God to Samuel inviting him to be his priest. The first reading from prophet Jeremiah becomes the voice of God, warning them to mend

their ways and turn back to God.

In the New Testament, Mary and Joseph heard the voice of God through the angel, the voice of God was heard at the baptism of Jesus in the Jordan. “He is my beloved Son...”, and at the time of transfiguration..., Paul heard the voice of God on the way to Damascus “Saul, Saul why are you persecuting me?” There are 100s of examples where people heard the voice of God in the Bible. One fact is that those who heard the voice of God changed their ways, their life was filled with God’s grace and blessings.

Yes, God does speak to us but in His own ways... I would have not been a priest if I had not to hear the voice of God nor you would have been here. each one of us has heard God’s voice in some way or other and therefore we made this radical decision of leaving our family and surrendering our lives in the hands of God and for the service of God’s people.

Unfortunately the voice of God in many instances is being lost in the noise of this modern world. The voice of materialism, consumerism to possess more and more... the voice of hedonism beckoning us to pleasure for the sake of pleasure.. voice of me..me..ism, selfishness, egoism. In today’s Gospel, Herod had a choice either to listen to the voice of God or man’s voice. John the Baptist was God’s voice and Herodias was the voice of the world. For reasons he knew best, he chose to listen to the worldly voice. We know the consequences he had to face in his life because he refused to hear the voice of God.

There are many voices crying around us today, drowning out the God’s voice. The hard fact is that it is not enough to hear God’s voice just once but we need to hear it constantly, every moment of our lives. The second hard fact is that the

voice of God can be listened only by those willing to listen. When the king of France complained to Joan of Arc; “Oh, God’s voice, your voices.. why can’t I hear any voices?” The condemned woman replied, “You would if you listen”. Unless I have a disposition to listen, I will not listen God’s voice.

Let us look at the life of St. John Marie Vianney. I think he did just 3 things in his life as a priest: praying, preaching and listening to confessions. In praying he listened to the voice of God. In preaching and confessions he became the voice of God to others.

When he was appointed as a chaplain at Ars, on the first day of his arrival, he was almost alone in the church celebrating the Holy Mass. No parishioners were interested in participating in the Eucharist. But a few days later some of his parishioners came out of curiosity to see what this priest is here to do in their parish; people found him on his knees in prayer before the tabernacle as though he truly saw someone. They found him in the same posture, morning, afternoon and evening. In deep prayer, he was listening to the voice of God who guided him to radically change the lives of people.

After hearing the voice, he became the voice of God to his people. In confessional, where he is supposed to have spent 11 to 16 hours a day, he became God’s voice by opening the treasure of forgiveness to every person. By being the voice of God, he brought even the worst sinner to be embraced by God’s love and mercy. He became a man consumed by the confessional.

By becoming a voice of God through preaching, Fr. Vianney’s words were simple, but words with fire, unforgettable words that won the heartfelt admiration of the people.

The people of Ars were busy in drinking and dancing, and

some in illicit activities; St. John Marie Vianney by becoming the voice of God changed their lives completely.

As we celebrate the feast, let us ask ourselves, do we hear God's voice constantly? Or are we busy in listening to the voices of this world? Do I spend enough time in prayer? Do I respect and visit the sacraments of Penance and Eucharist with great devotion?

Let us ask St. John Marie Vianney to pray and intercede for us that we may always listen to the voice of God and be that voice to everyone around us. Amen

(Redacted from the homily based on
Jer 26:11-16, 24 and Mt 14:1-12.)