

Monday, 17th Week in Ordinary Time – Year II (2026)

If I ever gave titles to homilies, today's might well be "The Good-for-Nothing Dirty Underwear Homily."

It is startling, almost jarring, to imagine that the all-powerful God — the One who created the heavens and the earth from nothing — would ask His prophet Jeremiah to use something as undignified as a filthy loincloth to make a point. Yet God often chooses the unexpected to reveal the truth.

Our first readings this week continue our journey through the life of Jeremiah.

Today's passage introduces the first of several symbolic actions through which the prophet confronts Judah and Israel with the reality of their spiritual condition. And as always, Scripture speaks not only to them, but to us.

We often think of prophecy as spoken words, but in the Bible the prophet's entire life becomes the message. Jeremiah's symbolic act in chapter 13 centers on — of all things — a soiled linen loincloth.

This garment, worn close to the skin, was part of the priestly attire. It represented intimacy, closeness, and the covenant bond God desired with His people. The command not to wash it is a vivid portrayal of how that covenant had been stained by pride, idolatry, and stubborn hearts.

When we were children, we were surprisingly skilled at insulting one another. God Himself uses that blunt language here: Judah has become like this worthless loincloth. Their disobedience has rendered them unable to fulfill the very purpose for which they were chosen.

And we are not so different. We too fail to listen. We too allow sin to soil the relationship God desires with us. As St. Paul reminds us, we have all sinned and fallen short of the glory of God.

But the message does not end with ruin — it ends with remembrance and hope.

Today, let us call to mind the white garment of our Baptism: clean, pure, and radiant. It is the sign that we have put on Christ, the spotless Lamb. In His blood we have been washed clean. What was once stained can be restored. What was once “good for nothing” can be made new.

Jeremiah’s loincloth may be an uncomfortable image, but it is also a merciful one. It reminds us of what happens when we cling to anything but God — and of the grace that awaits when we cling to Him again.