

HOMILY SUNDAY 14 – B – PREACHED (Homily 02)\*  
“*Called To Be Prophets*”

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Have you ever thought of yourself as a prophet?

To be baptized into Jesus Christ means that we are all called to be prophets.

Our baptismal call is often taken for granted. We know that we are baptized but we easily overlook that fact that to be baptized is to share in the priestly, prophetic and kingly role of Jesus.

In today’s gospel, Jesus himself finds it difficult to teach in his home town, which unfortunately is all too normal. It seems that it is always easier to accept a resource person when they come from somewhere else. Those whom we know are too familiar, too well known. We know their weaknesses and that tends to hide their gifts. Ezekiel, in the first reading, experiences the same challenge.

A modern day example is Ron Rolheiser, an Oblate theologian and spiritual writer. He packs halls in the States and Europe as a celebrity, but when he dared to give a retreat in Saskatoon that dealt with a challenging topic, it was cancelled due to lack of participants.

Sr. Joan Chittister OSB provides an interesting reflection on being a prophet. She writes, “We like to separate the prophets of the church from the people of the church. We like to separate ourselves from the demands of greatness. But the prophetic dimensions of the church, Scripture demonstrates in its greatest prophetic figures of Amos, Hosea, Isaiah, Micah, and Ezekiel, are simple souls just like us: ordinary citizens, compassionate lovers, justice-seeking and persistent idealists who move with courage into places that everyone else takes for granted, and speak God's word in the midst of human chaos loudly, clearly, courageously, whatever the levy it imposes on their own lives. Prophecy, in other words, is not a luxury; it is an essential dimension of the Christian life. We will not be forgiven our disdain of holy risk in the name of weakness.”

We need to be reminded over and over again that being prophetic is part of our baptismal calling. To be prophetic is to be first of all immersed with the mind and heart of God through prayer and study around any particular issue.

It is to be on fire for fairness and justice for especially the poor and downtrodden, for whom God has a particular care and concern. And it is then to have the courage to speak truth to power in pointing out any abuses or injustice that might exist in any given situation, risking one's own comfort, reputation and convenience in the process.

Sojourners Magazine, in the July/August of 2002, carried a piece featuring the prophetic action of a very ordinary worker. Apparently the management of a group of Florida nursing homes filed objections with the National Labor Relations Board claiming that organizers had used voodoo practices to intimidate a largely Haitian workforce into voting to unionize at one of their homes.

Marie Jean-Phillipe, a Haitian-American and one of the staff of 86 who was encouraging others to vote for the union, was portrayed as a "priestess" who used "voodoo beads." In fact, this quiet little lady was a Catholic daily communicant who carried a rosary and sometimes prayed it walking the corridors when things got quiet. The real issues were low wages, unaffordable health insurance and mistreatment from management, not voodoo beads, but it's not always easy for people to deal with the truth, especially when there's money involved. These people were taking offence at Marie, tripping over her on a major issue. They didn't like her message, so she must be "beside herself," or even in cahoots with the devil. Doesn't that sound like the Gospel of today?

Perhaps today we can reflect on how we can be more prophetic in our own lives. Are we aware of any injustice, unfairness, discrimination or prejudice in our family circle, school situation, work place or community? Can we make a point of gathering up more information about the situation and praying about it to discover the mind of God in this situation? Then can we take some positive action or speak to this situation to help to bring about a resolution that will make our little corner of the world a better place?

Richard Rohr, another modern day prophet, shares this insight into being prophetic: "There are two ways of being a prophet. One is to tell the enslaved that they can be free. It is the difficult path of Moses. The second is to tell those who think they are free that they are in fact enslaved. This is the even more difficult path of Jesus."

The Eucharist that we celebrate today is a gift to us flowing from the prophetic action of Jesus who confronted the injustices of his day with compassion and integrity at the cost of giving up his very own life.

May our sharing in his Word and his Body and Blood empower us to be more prophetic in addressing the injustices of our day. May God bless us all.