

FR. JOHN'S HOMILY

Fourteenth Sunday in Ordinary Time, July 4, 2021

I experienced hatred and rejection of the church in my first years as a priest. I remember going to the hospital to anoint a lady who was dying. Once I arrived the whole family was there, and it was obvious to me there was animosity and hatred toward me. I had never met them before. After I anointed the Mother, several of the children expressed their hatred toward the church. I don't even remember what they were upset about, but since I represented the church, then their hatred was directed toward me. I said "sorry" and left. The only thing I can remember afterward is praying for the family, that they would allow Jesus to heal them and give them peace.

There have been many other experiences where hatred was directed toward the church or toward me, through the years. What about you? Have you ever experienced any hatred toward yourself because of your Catholic faith? We know there are many reasons people get upset today. Hatred is expressed because of our sex, our race, our accent, what we said or didn't say. It could be for many things. These moments in life of hatred can cause us to be resentful, angry, sad, and dejected. We have to do our best to not be tempted to giving in to these moments when we know it is not our fault. We must realize that because of our Faith and our relationship with God, it is part of our prophetic calling. When we live for God and His ways, we do have to be prepared and ready. Am I ready to be a prophet for God? To be a messenger of God in a time when people have closed their ears and hardened their hearts toward God, we need to remember that at our Baptism we shared in the three fold office of Jesus: priest, prophet and king. All of us baptized in the Water and in the Holy Spirit have a share in the prophetic office of Jesus.

Jesus is asking us to open our hearts, our minds and our whole being to Him so that God can send us to be his voice, his truth, and his presence in the world. In a world that doesn't accept Him, our faith, or our practice of religion, Jesus is not asking us to do anything that He Himself didn't endure.

The First Reading today is from the Prophet Ezekiel. God sends prophets to His people. Asking Ezekiel to be ready, for they are hard of face and obstinate of heart, they are a rebellious house. Ezekiel is told by the Lord to not worry about the results; one thing for sure they will know that a prophet has been among them. Remember Ezekiel received his calling when he was in exile in Babylon. Ezekiel knew in God's time he would give his people a new heart and a new spirit which would come under the new covenant. It would be the work of God. So Ezekiel was willing to be God's mouthpiece under these difficult and dark times. Am I willing to be a prophet to a people who will not be receptive to what you have to say? Like Ezekiel to be faithful and regardless of what happens, but they will know a messenger of God was in their midst.

On the other hand, not everyone who speaks is a prophet. The Old Testament and the New both understand clearly that a true prophet must speak according to the Word of God, and not according to his or hers own words. Today many claim to be prophetic, but is it God's Word or their words? We need to continue to discern when one speaks as a

prophet: is it from God? And when the time comes that we have to be God's prophets, we have to be sure this is of God and not of ourselves.

A true prophet in our Christian tradition must reflect both the Holy Scriptures and the Church. The Prophet Ezekiel clearly speaks the same message as the other prophets and that message is always the same: faithfulness to God's word revealed in Holy Scripture, love for God, love for others, care for the needy and the oppressed.

The message always demands that we give up our own concerns and be concerned only for God and His words. The moment we begin to seek our own good, our own enrichment, and our own way of thinking—then we become unfaithful to the Word of God.

The Second Reading today is from the Second Letter to the Corinthians. Here we also listen to God's word where Paul speaks about the challenges of giving himself over to Jesus, the Risen Lord. *"I am content with weaknesses, insults, hardships, persecutions, and constraints, for the sake of Christ; for when I am weak, then I am strong."* God reassured Paul that His grace was sufficient for him to endure whatever may come.

We are invited to embrace the Word of Jesus Christ with all our strength and all our being. When we do embrace this Word of God, we shall surely suffer and know our own weaknesses. By sharing his weakness, Paul reveals the prophetic word. The more we embrace Christ and follow His way, the more our lives speak about God and His incredible love for us. We prophesy simply by living.

The Gospel today is from Mark and takes us back to the challenge of rejection. Jesus had to face much rejection in his time, yet He continued to proclaim the Good News of God's Kingdom. We should remember that Ezekiel told us that it does not matter if a prophet is recognized or not. What matters is that the prophet speaks the word of God. Today's Gospel points out that Jesus was rejected in his own native town. The town's people thought they knew him. *"Is he not the carpenter, the son of Mary?"* But they did not. He could do very little with them because of their lack of faith, but they knew a prophet was in their midst. Israelites knew that a prophet was in their midst when Ezekiel spoke. The Corinthians knew that a prophet was in their midst when Paul spoke the Lord's words.

God is always speaking to us, and by our lives is calling us to speak on behalf of Him. Today God invites us to listen to the prophets! Each of us, in our own way, are called to be His prophet. Let's pray for one another that we can be courageous and strong in giving witness to Him, whom we receive today. God's needs us to be his prophets today.