

July 5, 2015 – 14th Sunday Ordinary Time – Cycle B
Fr. Larry Richards

Good Evening,

Tonight when we listen to the readings, the readings have to do with prophesy and to being a prophet. And so I am going to teach you tonight how to be a prophet because by definition when you are baptized right after or during your baptismal ceremony, the priest anointed you with oil and it was the special oil of chrism that is made by the bishop every Easter and when you were anointed, the priest or the deacon said “Be anointed” and he anointed you as a priest, a prophet and a king. As a priest, you are anointed to offer up your life to God, as a prophet you are told that you are anointed to listen to God’s word and speak his word to the community. As a king or as a queen, you have authority over your own life, and we pray that one day, as we prayed then that you would submit authority to the Lordship of Jesus Christ.

And so tonight we are going to focus on what does that mean to be a prophet and how to be a prophet. Now one of the greatest prophets of our own time of course is Pope Francis and Francis speaks God’s word to us and just as Jesus made people uncomfortable, right, it says a prophet is without honor in his own place and they found offense at Him. So too, does our Holy Father, Pope Francis, speak God’s word, and people find offense at him and they say stuff like, you know, you shouldn’t pay attention to other things, don’t worry about the environment, pay attention to other things, you just tell people they can’t get you know, just follow God’s law, don’t tell them about divorce, remarried people, you want to accept them, you want to reach out to all these people, tell them no, they’re no good.

But don’t tell us we’re no good, it’s amazing when I was a young seminarian in Epworth Iowa, a bishop came, Bishop Francis from New Jersey, God rest him, and he gave; you know I was sitting there thinking I’ve never ever remembered one homily that was given my time at Divine Word Seminary except for one by Bishop Francis, and he said our job as Christians is to comfort the afflicted and to afflict the comfortable. That is what we are called to do. And if you haven’t got it yet, that’s what I have been doing all my priesthood. And that is what Pope Francis does. He comforts the afflicted and he afflicts the comfortable. Especially us priests, bishops, and cardinals, right? He just afflicts us, it’s amazing they haven’t poisoned him yet while he sleeps, it just unbelievable to me that he keep

doing these things and he----you know, we think hey excuse us Pope, we're the bishops, we're the priests, we take care of ourselves, you go tell them sinners over there. And he goes, "no, no, let's deal with you and your sin first". My sins, are you kidding? Are you saying that we're sinful people? Yes! And that's what a prophet does. And that is what we are called to do, to comfort the afflicted and afflict the comfortable. And the way that we do this is, we got to be doing three things.

First of all before we even go on to those three things, what a prophet does, he does for the salvation of the people. The whole reason a prophet is called by God is to save everybody. It isn't to condemn everybody, it isn't to put everybody down, but it is to save their souls. That's the number one goal of every person here. But what you and I got to be doing is knowing that you and I exist to save other people. Now sometimes we're thinking "Ah Father I think it's going to be hard enough for me to save myself", that's the problem. When you know that you are called to save others, then you can be transformed yourself and you'll transform the world. It's kind of like we are in the life raft and people are dying around us, you can't just say, "I'm sorry for you that you are dying but I don't want to tell you anything because I don't want to offend you, I'm just going to stay here, keep quiet and be saved all by myself".

If you are in the life raft and people are dying around you, you grab those people and you get them in the life raft with you. That's a prophet. And the prophet, the first thing the prophet does is speak of the love of God. But love doesn't make us comfortable. Love makes us uncomfortable for not doing what the lover wants. And so we speak the truth in love and so what we got to do to be truly true prophets, as opposed to a false prophet, is we first of all have to be people who have our lives surrendered to the Holy Spirit because it is only the Spirit of God that can speak the word of God and a prophet speaks God's word to the community. So it can only be done in the breath and the life of the Holy Spirit. And so for anyone who says "I am a prophet who doesn't have devotion to the Holy Spirit, you know they're lying because only the Spirit of God can speak the word of God. So we need to have this daily surrender to the Holy Spirit. So the Holy Spirit is the one who speaks through us and not ourselves.

The second thing we need to do is we need to be people of prayer, because if you listen to the first reading, it says the Spirit made me stand up, he made me stand up and He says now go and tell the people. Tell them, some will listen to you, some will not, but you still speak it. And when we speak God's words, some will listen to us and some will not. Some will hate us, some will love us. They

hated Jesus in His own town and they eventually killed Him. But He still spoke the word of love to the people and we are called to do that. And so the way we do that is by listening in prayer, because when you and I go to pray, God wants to speak to us and he wants to speak to others his word of salvation. But that means that when we're listening, when we're praying, we need to be listening. And again as I said gently at the other masses, either listen to God in prayer or keep your mouth shut. Right? Because if we're not listening to God in prayer, then we can't be saying I'm speaking His word to anybody. So you can't say anything unless you're a man or a woman who prays every day and in your prayer, you listen. So the second thing you got to do to be a good prophet is you got to listen to God every day in prayer.

And then the third thing that has to happen comes from this humility that Paul talks about today. Now, of course, Paul, was one of the greatest prophets, right? Because Paul wrote most of the New Testament. And so what he did was the word of God and he got it from the Word of God, Himself. And so, he goes though in the second reading and talks about that he struggled and he said, "God, You got to help me. You got to get rid of this stuff that I struggle with, my weakness." And God says "No". Now some people think erroneously that Paul struggled with some particular sin. Totally incorrect. Paul struggled with a physical infirmity. Some theologians, scripture scholars, believe he had epilepsy. So when people saw him, they were not impressed with Paul and that's okay because people didn't have to be impressed with Paul. They had to be impressed with Jesus inside of Paul.

So too, with you and me. No one has to be impressed looking at us. I know, I know. But they got to be impressed with the Jesus inside of us. And so what Paul learned, is he would boast of his weaknesses because people weren't looking at him, then he knew that everything came from Jesus. And if we learn to speak His will, speak His work through prayer listening, and through the power of the Holy Spirit, then all we got to do is we need to get out of the way and let God speak His word to the community. Paul would say, "The greatest thing that any of us should be is prophets". Why? Because prophets save others. Do you exist to save others? That's why God gave you the gift of prophesy. So that not only will you make it to heaven one day, God willing, but do you bring everyone you know with you? Could you imagine on the day of judgment, at the last day of judgment, Jesus comes and you hear him say "Come you who are blessed by my Father, says the Lord, inherit the kingdom prepared from the foundation of the world and he calls you and you get up and you're all excited, and you start walking into heaven,

ahhh – so relieved, and then you hear Jesus say that next words of Mathew 25, “Get out of my sight, you’re condemned to the everlasting fire prepared for the devil and his angels. And you turn around there’s your friends, there’s people in your family, and they’re all being sent to hell and they look at you and say ‘Why didn’t you tell me? Why didn’t you tell me about Jesus? Why did you tell me dirty jokes, why did you tell me sin, why did you tell me all these other things but you never told me about Jesus?’

Can you imagine how you will feel on that day, the day you get to go to heaven, and the friends, the people you knew, go to hell because you were not a prophet. You didn’t speak His word of love to them. You didn’t speak the word of truth and the darkness. All you did was condemn. So today, what God is calling everyone here to do is to be His prophet for the salvation of the world. Do it and bring life to yourselves and life and salvation to others.

You got it? Get it? Gonna do it? May each of you know His love today and forever, Amen.