

Jan. 31, 2021 | [Fourth Sunday in Ordinary Time \(B\)](#)

Dt 18:15-20

Ps 95:1-2, 6-7, 7-9

1 Cor 7:32-35

Mk 1:21-28

By Br. Steve Herro, O. Praem.

On the last day of January 2021, we pause to celebrate the Eucharist and pause to *take a breath* from what has been a very tumultuous and anxious month. As journalist Meghna Chakrabarti [noted](#) on Jan. 22: on the first Wednesday of January, our Capitol was terrorized; on the second Wednesday of January, the 45th President of the United States was impeached for the second time; and on the third Wednesday of January, the 46th President of the United States was inaugurated. In the midst of this historic January in United States politics, perhaps the first reading for Sunday, January 31 (Judges 18: 15-20), could not be more appropriate.

The first reading addresses prophets called by God in service to the Jewish people. It is grouped with similar texts on judges, kings, and priests in Judges 17-18. As our country struggles with divisions within our religious and civil leadership, what is the message for us today as we read how God calls specific people to be judges, kings, priests, and prophets to the Chosen People?

The reading asks us to lower the temperature on how we might respond if opposed to the words of God's prophets (and maybe religious and civil leaders with whom we might disagree). Moses, speaking for the Lord, mentions to the Israelites that they are called to listen to God's chosen prophets. After all, Moses reminds the people that they did not want to communicate directly with Yahweh but asked God to select an intermediary as his spokesperson (Deuteronomy 18: 16, Exodus 20: 19).

The word **listen** jumps out at me:

"A prophet like me will the LORD, your God, raise up for you from among your own kin; to him you shall **listen.**" (Deuteronomy 18: 15, emphasis added)

"Whoever will not **listen** to my words which he speaks in my name, I myself will make him answer for it." (Deuteronomy 18: 19, emphasis added)

As Moses was instructing the Jewish people on relations between themselves and their judges, kings, prophets, and priests, he would have approved of at least one thread from [President Biden's Inaugural Address](#):

"And so today, at this time and in this place, let's start afresh, all of us. Let's begin to listen to one another again, hear one another, see one another, show respect to one another. Politics doesn't have to be a raging fire, destroying everything in its path. Every disagreement doesn't have to be a cause for total war, and we must reject the culture in which facts themselves are manipulated, and even manufactured."

Steve professed solemn vows to St. Norbert Abbey in 1991. He has served in justice ministries for his Abbey, the Diocese of Green Bay, and Catholic Charities USA. He enjoys blogging, reading, gardening, biking, tennis, lobbying legislators, and volunteering in the community.