



*Please note that this summer we are re-running reflections from the last B cycle (2018).*

[Fourteenth Sunday in Ordinary Time \(B\)](#)

Ezekiel 2:2-5

Psalm 123:1-4

2 Corinthians 12:7-10

Mark 6:1-6

*By Dianne Bergant, CSA*

If the readings for today were offered as a job description of one intent on taking a stand for what is right, I doubt that anyone would apply for the position. In the first reading, the prophet Ezekiel is told: "I am sending you to... a nation of rebels who have rebelled against me; ...whose children are bold of face and stubborn of heart." The gospel passage is no more encouraging. Because of his teaching, Jesus is rejected by the people of his own hometown, people who knew the integrity of his family, people who watched him grow from a pious boy into a deeply religious young man. Such is the lot of the prophet. But then, who really wants to be a prophet?

Many people today think of a prophet as a woman or man who can look into the future as a fortuneteller might. Others ascribe prophetic insight to popular religious speakers or writers who promise a bright and prosperous future. Finally, social critics are often labeled prophets. While certain aspects of each characterization are found in the biblical portrayals of the prophets, none of them accurately describes them. Biblical prophets do have insight, but into the present, not primarily into the future. They do speak of the future, but as the unfolding of the actions of the present. Furthermore, the future they promise is not always bright and prosperous. Our understanding of justice claims that faithful living promises a bright future, but unfaithfulness brings forth misfortune. Finally, not every social critic is a prophet; some of them are simply whiners.

What most characterizes the biblical prophets was their commitment to God and to their religious tradition. It was because of this commitment that they were well aware of the infidelity of their religious companions. For this reason they spoke out in condemnation. Some denounced the people for sins of idolatry (Hosea). Others cried out against the people's disdain for issues of social justice (Amos). Today's readings do not focus on a prophetic message of consolation or comfort; they consist of a prophetic call to repentance and righteous living, and they underscore the people's response to that call. In these readings it is a response of rebellion and rejection.

As members of the body of Christ, we are all called to take a stand for matters of justice and peace. This requires that we critique current social and religious systems and practices that diverge from or openly conflict with aspects of our religious tradition. Like the prophets, we must know well and be committed to that tradition. Then we must be willing to pay the price for that commitment; to remain steadfast in the face of misunderstanding, criticism, rejection, and sometimes even physical danger. Whether we

appreciate the job description or not, by virtue of our Baptism, we have all been called to be this kind of a prophet.

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