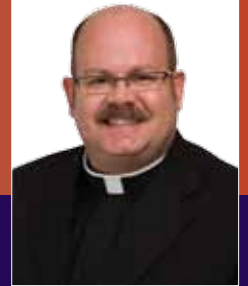


Prophets for our time



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Priests are not historians, recording only past events. Nor are they fortune tellers who can predict what will happen. Rather, priests are called to lead us decisively into the future, by fearlessly informing us of what God is doing in his world today, and what he expects and demands of us, his chosen people, as we journey to tomorrow.

Priests must speak with the voice of a prophet. Old Testament prophets like Isaiah, Ezekiel and Jeremiah were compelled to proclaim a message that in effect said: "Right now, this is what God asks and expects of you: we have seen the signs, and this is how God intends to use us." A prophet is someone who speaks spiritually, seeing life as he does through the eyes of God himself. Or better still, he is someone with "the mind of Christ" (1 Cor. 2:16), calling us to do fearlessly whatever is God's will for us right here and now.

Being a prophet is not easy, because often the message to be delivered is counter to the culture at the time. Many of the Old Testament prophets were not received well by the people of their day, and at times it is not much different today. People do not like to hear that they are living counter to God's plan for humanity, yet pointing this out is the duty of a prophet. Without prophets to remind us of God's plan and God's will for us, it is easy to convince ourselves that God will understand or that how we are living isn't that far from the kingdom of God.

Though the message may not always be received well by the people of God, it is the responsibility of the priest acting as prophet for our time to remind people of:

- The dignity of all human life from conception to natural death;
- Our commitment to the poor and downtrodden and that this is not optional;
- Building our lives on a spiritual foundation and not a material foundation;
- The temptations that can so easily become pitfalls for our lives;
- Values that are worth sacrificing for or even dying for;
- The truth found only in Jesus Christ and His Church; and
- Our need for a Savior, because we cannot save ourselves.



This is not an exhaustive list of the prophetic task of the priest today, but it certainly reminds us that the message is no less counter-cultural today than it was in the past.

Truth be told it is really the responsibility of each and every baptized individual to be a prophetic voice in the midst of the world. On the day of our baptism each of us was anointed with the chrism of salvation to enable us to live out our call to be "priest, prophet, and king ... as members of [Christ's] body, sharing everlasting life." (Rite of Baptism) Though it is the responsibility of the priest to act as prophet for the faith community he serves, it is the responsibility of all the baptized to live in such a way that their lives speak prophetically in the midst of the world.

This is no easy task, because as Jesus reminded his disciples, "no prophet gains acceptance in his native place." (Luke 4:24), but we know that God will give us what we need to complete the task that he has given each of us even if the task may seem impossible.

Remember ... nothing is impossible with God!

Catholic Diocese of
Grand Rapids online
vocational resources:



Priestly vocations

dioceseofgrandrapids.org/vocation/welcome.htm

Religious orders

dioceseofgrandrapids.org/clergy/religiousorders.htm