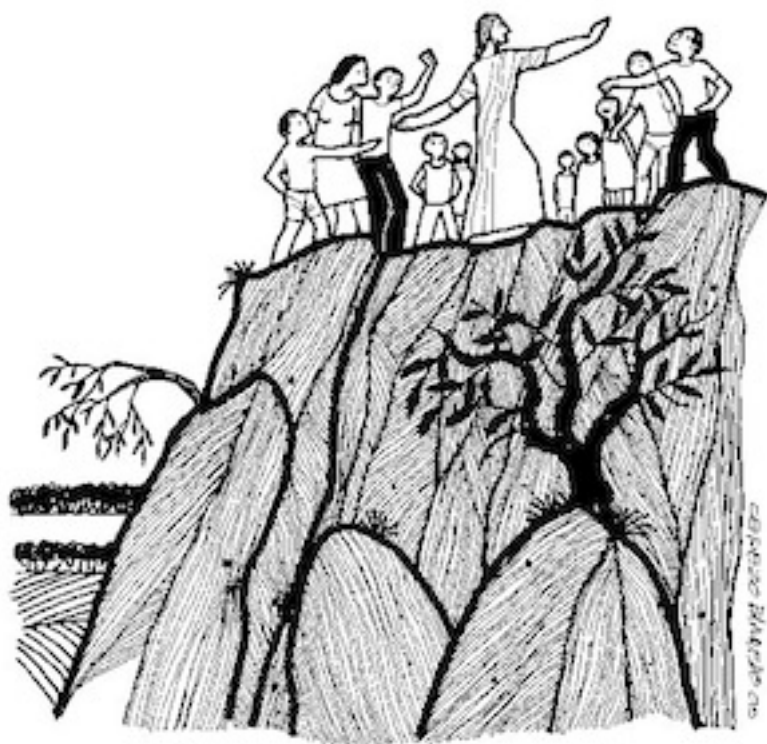


Commentary to the 4th Sunday of Ordinary Time: Hometown Prophets



So many times great doctors have told me that they can be doctors for all except their brothers and sisters, mothers and fathers. Family members seldom listen to them. Many priests, lawyers, and other professionals have the same complaint. It seems that people would rather listen to a stranger than someone they know well. It is really a very human way of acting. We all do this. Instead of seeing the person's abilities, we see his or her background. A patient may see a skilled physician. A parent sees a child.

The same thing can be said regarding the spiritual life. Many times people will not acknowledge the spirituality of someone they are very close to because they still see that person as he or she was before being committed to the Lord. Many of our young people will return from a spiritual experience like the retreat we had in December, or a Steubenville Conference, a leadership conference, etc, and be on fire for the Lord, but be rejected by their parents who still see a Teen who got into serious trouble three

months before or who can be nasty on a bad day. And parents might ask, “How is it that this son or daughter I used to threaten to get to go to Church now wants to proclaim Christ?” Or a wife might say, “My husband would only come to Church on Christmas, and now he is reading scripture and talking about God? That doesn’t make sense.” But it does make sense. Jesus even told a parable about this. He called it the Pearl of Great Price. A merchant sold all he had to purchase a treasure. That is what people do when they encounter Jesus Christ. The encounter with Christ leads many to radical changes, including those closest to us.

We are all guilty of refusing to acknowledge the growth in spirituality of others we think we know so well. We change for the better and hope that others will recognize this, but we don’t take the time to acknowledge the spirituality of these same people. That is because we are proud. All of us. It takes humility to acknowledge the presence of the Lord in another person.

It also takes courage to declare the truth to someone without considering if this would lead to their rejecting us. Jesus was not afraid to proclaim the truth. It meant rejection from his own neighbors, and almost led to his death off a cliff. But Jesus held onto the truth and through the power of the truth walked right through those who doubted him.

We have to have the courage to confront our fear of rejection by our peers. Perhaps we might think, “If I were to say to the people that the type of party they’ve invited me to is wrong and incompatible with my following the Lord, they will laugh at me, or ostracize me, perhaps throw me off the cliff of their social network.” Well, maybe we need to pass through their midst and find other friends. Living the Truth of God is more important than being part of a crowd. And, by the way, there are members of that crowd who will be challenged with the choice of following us and who will follow the Truthful One.

“I am not good enough to lead others to Christ,” we might say. Yes we are. He makes us good enough. We have to have the humility to acknowledge the power of God in others, and the power of God in ourselves. And we have to recognize that, ultimately, evangelization is not about ourselves, it is about the Kingdom of God.

So who was really up there on that cliff, about to be pushed off? Was it Jesus? It seemed that way. But it was the crowd that was rejecting Him that was pushing itself off the cliff. Like lemmings, people fall to their spiritual death, yelling out all the way down, “But everyone is doing it.”

There are many times in our lives when we will have to have the courage to stand up and proclaim the truth. There are many times in our lives when we are going to have to hear the truth when it comes from a familiar person, a son, a daughter, a father, a mother, a husband, a wife. The truth leads to the Kingdom of God. The truth will set us free, free to be ourselves. We need to follow the True One away from the cliff.

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