

Commentary on the Gospel for Sat, Dec 23rd 2017

I was a little surprised as I wrote my reflection, not about the direction it was going but on who became the focus of my prayer. Our readings today speak clearly about the coming of prophets. In the reading from Malachi, we hear the Lord saying a messenger is coming to prepare the way, to refine and purify and we hear his name is Elijah. From Luke we hear of the birth of John whom we know prepares the way for the Lord by encouraging repentance and baptism.

I believe we are all called to be prophets and yet our world is not filled with people on the street corners proclaiming the coming of the Lord. I know I have never done that. That got me to thinking about the deeper meaning of prophet and reflecting on who called me back and how that happened.

In 1999 I attended a women's weekend retreat at my parish. I went home from that weekend feeling I had been "called back" to relationship with God. As I was reflecting on this in light of today's readings, I realized that it wasn't one person or one witness that called me back to the Lord, it was the presence and the care of the community of women leading that weekend retreat that reminded me of God's love and care for me. It wasn't someone proclaiming with words; it was their presence. Their desire to be in relationship with me conveyed God's desire for me. How they lived their lives inspired me to live a Christian life. Coming back to the readings, my attention was now focused on Elizabeth, not John and Elijah. Elizabeth, I would say, lived a prophet life. She was faithful to God and accepted the gifts given to her. She carried a child late in life and when her voice needed to be heard to give John his name, she spoke. She was also prophet when she, maybe more obviously, was present to Mary in the story of the Visitation. Mary went to be with her cousin during what must have been a most anxious time. She searched out someone who could encourage and support her in trusting the Lord. I imagine Elizabeth had many prophetic words for Mary along with simply being present to her, being a holy companion to her.

As we near the celebration of the birth of Jesus and spend time with the Lord today in prayer, I invite us to consider that sometimes we are called to speak out and be bold. But also remember, that simply how we live our lives can be prophetic as well. Consider today:

"How are we called to be prophets in the world today?"

"Who is or has been a prophet to us – calling us back, bringing us a message from God?"

O Emmanuel, our King and Giver of Law:

Come to save us, Lord our God!

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