

Most people who work for a living have parts of their jobs that they just do not enjoy doing. They are the things that no matter how much you get paid – it is never enough. These are often messy, smelly or just plain dangerous. Yet, we do them. We must do them – it is our job.

At the same time there are parts of our labor that is very satisfying such as friendships that develop, the good that is done for a coworker or a customer or a student. And it is gratifying, at the end of the day, to look at the completion of the work and see a job well done.

Most of our work is not glamorous, but there is dignity in all honest labor.

There is, however a big difference between a job and a vocation. A job is how one makes money in order to meet their essential needs and the needs of their family. .

But a vocation is what **God** calls a person into. It is more of a state of life than anything else.

For instance, I am a spouse, a father and a deacon. Becoming the person that God intended me to be is the result of living out, not my job but these vocations.

Each week we pray for vocations, for more priests, deacons and those who enter the religious life and there **is** a great need for these people. But we are astute enough to also pray for those whose vocations are that of being single or married because God has called all of us to one or the other.

At our baptism, we were also appointed to the vocations of priest, prophet and king. None of these are easy, but for my money, prophet is the toughest of all.

A prophet is the “mouthpiece of God”. It is more than just repeating the words of scripture. It is the spreading of truth and most people do not want to hear the truth. Being told the Truth, especially the eternal truths can make people *uneasy at the least...* and perhaps *murderous at the very worst*.

Why, then would God place us, or anyone into such a position? Why does He call us to be prophets where the human risk is so high? The answer might be surprising: He does it because God IS Love.

Love is more concerned about the welfare of others than with one's own image, one's own comfort.

For example, if someone is on a pleasant canoe ride down a river, love cares enough to warn the passengers that Niagara Falls is up ahead.

Religious and moral choices are like this. They set one on a course that leads either to a safe harbor or over the falls. Sex outside of marriage, intoxication with drugs and alcohol, lying, cheating stealing, all these choices have very unpleasant, sometimes even deadly, consequences.

So God sends prophets whose role includes warning people that they are headed over the falls. You'd think people would be grateful for the heads up. But often people respond to truth by killing the messenger.

Why is this? Because we believe in the idea that **we** are basically "good people" **whom God ought to appreciate**, and that our beliefs and lifestyle are at least as good as all others— and these are comforting illusions.

And when a prophet calls all or any of this into question, we find it threatening and very uncomfortable. If the prophet is right, this demands change, and change always means some pain, and we don't like pain.

So if this is how people are going to respond, why bother to rock the boat? Why stick your neck out?

Because people have a right to the truth. Being a prophet is sometimes messy, smelly or even dangerous... yet we cannot shy away from it.

The prophet's responsibility is to speak God's word as clearly and convincingly as possible. What people will do with that word is not under

their control. But always, **always**, the key motivation of the prophet must be love.

As we enter the month of February, we are almost bombarded by a view that love is romantic. **But genuine love is not about being sentimental.** If we buy into that, then what happens to our relationships when our romantic expectations fail us?

Paul tells us today of a love that is different, a love that is true, a **love that is not jealous, nor pompous, a love that does not seek its own interests; it does not rejoice over wrongdoing but rejoices with the truth.**

**This love bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, endures all things... Love never fails.**

The fact is, Love has high standards, and frankly, if left to our own devices, we fail at it more than we succeed.

But as Mother Teresa was fond of saying, "God does not require us to have success; he requires us to be faithful".

We who have been baptized and confirmed have been given a share in Christ's prophetic anointing. If our goal is to be everybody's buddy, we are going to have a hard time being faithful. The word that God commands us to share **is** sometimes comforting, but it is **also** sometimes disturbing. We must never speak or act with the intent to harm, but we must also get beyond our fear of offending people **and love them enough** to tell them the truth if their choices are sending them over the falls.

Of course, there is always the question of the right place and time. But if no place is the right place and the right time never comes, we can be sure that we are allowing fear of other's opinion to get in the way of our genuine love for them.

The love of God, spoken about in 1st Corinthians 13, is tough love, it is love that demands sacrifices and effort and self-control. But as Paul reminds us, it is the most excellent way, and perhaps most importantly, again, this love **never fails**. And that is a truth people have a right to hear.

Take courage, seek the truth, love the truth and fearlessly speak the truth for God is with you. It is we who have to proclaim it, we are His Church, we are God's prophets today.