February 1, 2015  ***What is a prophet?***

4th Sunday, Year B

A recent conversation between a first-year seminarian and his professor went something like this:

Student: What is a prophet? I’m not sure I see how prophecy is supposed to matter to us in the 21st century.

Prof: Let’s answer the first question and then see about the second. A prophet is someone who prophesies.

Student: If I wrote that down on your test would you pass me?

Prof: Hah! Absolutely not.

Student: Okay, what does it mean to prophesy?

Prof: To prophesy is to say what God desires to be said.

Student: I still don’t think that would pass your test.

Prof: You are right. There are true and false prophets: true prophets speak the truth and false prophets speak falsehood.

Student: But false prophets would not really be prophets because they do not speak the truth.

Prof: Indeed!

Student: So . . . a prophet is someone who speaks the truth?

Prof: Well, a specific kind of truth: the truth with a capital ‘T’. The truth that prophets speak is God’s truth, the word of God. A prophet speaks the word of God.

Student: The authors of Holy Scripture, were they prophets?

Prof: Yes, they were: Moses was a prophet; John, the author of the Apocalypse was one too.

Student: Was Jesus a prophet?

Prof: Yes: he prophesied the destruction of the Second Temple, which happened about 40 years after his crucifixion in the year 70 AD. But Jesus was not merely a prophet, of course.

Student: Of course! So a prophet is someone who tells the future? That’s what I always thought.

Prof: No, not necessarily. Soothsayers and fortunetellers tell the future; do you consider them prophets?

Student: No way!

Prof: A prophet speaks the word of God, which may or may not involve telling the future. When a prophet talks about the future, he is telling us how to live today in light of what God wants to be said about the future.

Student: So prophecy is about God’s will for us. Why aren’t there any prophets today?

Prof: In Jesus, God said all he has to say. There is nothing left for God to say beyond Jesus himself. St John of the Cross said that.

Student: Wow, that’s deep. And that’s why we call Jesus the Word of God?

Prof: Exactly! God’s Word doesn’t fade with time, it gets deeper.

Student: Now I know what you are going to say to my second question: prophecy, even though it is so old, matters today because Jesus matters today. Jesus is God’s definitive Word, today as much as yesterday, and tomorrow just as much. Jesus tells us what it means to be human, and his resurrection shows us what our future is! We Catholics are the people whose lives are to point everyone to God’s future now. We are bearers of God’s Word; we are his prophets!

Prof: Well done! You are ready to preach, but you still have to take my test . . .

Chris Hackett CSsR

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***We respond***

ENTRANCE ANTIPHON (or a hymn) Save us, O Lord our God! And gather us from the nations, to give thanks to your holy name, and make it our glory to praise you.

RESPONSORIAL PSALM (Ps 94)

Antiphon: If today you hear his voice, harden not your hearts.

RESPONSE: **If today you hear his voice, harden not your hearts.**

LECTOR: Come, ring out our joy to the Lord; hail the rock who saves us. Let us come before him, giving thanks, with songs let us hail the Lord. R.

LECTOR: Come in; let us kneel and bend low; let us kneel before the God who made us for he is our God and we the people who belong to his pasture, the flock that is led by his hand. R.

LECTOR: O that today you would listen to his voice! “Harden not your hearts as at Meribah, as on that day at Massah in the desert when your fathers put me to the test; when they tried me, though they saw my work.” R.

GOSPEL ACCLAMATION Alleluia, alleluia! The people in darkness have seen a great light: a radiant dawn shines on those lost in death. Alleluia!

COMMUNION ANTIPHON (1) or (2) (or a hymn)

Let your face shine on your servant. Save me in your merciful love. O Lord, let me never be put to shame, for I call on you.

Or

Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the Kingdom of Heaven. Blessed are the meek, for they shall possess the land.

*TODAY’S READINGS* Deuteronomy 18: 15-20; Psalm 94; 1 Corinthians 7:32-35; Mark 1: 21-28

*NEXT WEEK* Job 7: 1-4, 6-7; 1; Psalm 146; 1 Corinthians 9:16-19, 22-23; Mark 1: 29-39