

Homily for the 14th Sunday of the Year 2021

In the baptism rite, immediately after the person has been named and baptised, the celebrant anoints the newly baptised on the crown of the head with chrism, reminding the newly baptised that she or he now shares the priestly, prophetic and royal roles of Christ himself. It is our prophetic role that is being highlighted in today's scripture, in the persons of Ezekiel and Jesus himself, a role which is not always easy to fulfil but which is as necessary today as at any time in the history of God's people.

Ezekiel recognises that he has been given the role by God to bring the people back to faithfulness. They had created their own comfort zones which had led them away from the God who had made a covenant relationship with them. They had rebelled, becoming defiant and obstinate, the implication being, that whatever Ezekiel said to them they were unlikely to listen. However, even if they didn't listen it was important that they should know there was a prophet, God's spokesperson among them. God was not leaving them alone. God was giving them another chance to respond to the call to come back, a call that is taken up in the psalm focusing on God's mercy.

Then we come to the gospel with Jesus returning to Nazareth. The fact that the disciples were with him suggests this wasn't a social visit, rather he was returning as a teacher, and at first his teaching made a deep impression. But then come the questions, we know this man, he was a carpenter, so where does he get this wisdom, how does he do these miracles? we know his mother, notice there is no mention of Joseph, we know his relatives, were they sisters and brothers, as the text says, or cousins? They wanted to focus on who Jesus was rather than who he now is. It is much easier having a carpenter in the shop rather than a prophet loose in the town. Their so called familiarity had bred contempt, they would not accept him. Jesus gives a stinging reposte – A prophet is only despised in his own country, among his own relations and in his own house. The break had come, Jesus never returns to Nazareth again in Mark's gospel. His family now will be made up of those who hear the word of God and put it into action.

To be a prophet is not only to speak the truth but to live the truth. This can be uncomfortable for the prophet and disconcerting for those to whom the prophet speaks. This was true for the great prophets in Old Testament times. It is also true today. There are climate change prophets and climate change deniers. There are prophets who work tirelessly to uphold human rights, to highlight injustice, to speak out against violence and war, to abolish the death penalty in those countries where it is still practiced. The true prophet is gifted with both courage and wisdom which is much wider than knowledge. When encountered by a prophetic voice we have a choice. The easier route is to raise questions and reject both the message and the messenger, as the climate change deniers do. The gospel response is to listen to what the prophet has to say, and, even if this means leaving our own comfort zones, to acknowledge the wisdom and truth of what is being said and being open to being transformed.

Bidding Prayers for the 14th Sunday of the Year 2021

Celebrant:

Conscious of the brokenness in our world, we turn to God in prayer.

Reader:

For the Church – that the Church will always be a welcoming home especially for the lost and the forsaken.

Lord in your mercy

For Governments and Leaders throughout the world – that they will do all they can to bring about a fairer distribution of the world's resources, bring an end to violence and war, and work for justice and peace for all.

Lord in your mercy

For the people of Columbia, and those other countries where there is so much injustice and suffering – that they will experience peace in their lives.

Lord in your mercy

For all those suffering in body, mind or spirit – that they and their families and carers will receive the love and support they need at this time.

Lord in your mercy

For those who have died, all victims of violence, accident, natural disasters and the covid pandemic and Terry Whalley, Gary Lynam, Sandra Muldoon, Gerard Whalley, Paddy McDermott, Winifred O'Gara and Peggy Woodcock, whose anniversaries occur this week – that they and all who have died may rest in peace and rise in glory.

Lord in your mercy

Either aloud or in silence we pray for our own special intentions...pause...then

Lord in your mercy

We ask the prayers of Mary as we say, Hail Mary...

Celebrant:

All loving God we place all our hope in you. We know that we can always turn to you in times of need. May the Gospel unfold in us as we seek to make Christ known, loved and served. We ask this through Christ our Lord. Amen