

This past week I attended a conference in Atlanta
with the Association of US Catholic Priests.
I was there primarily as a vendor trying to gather some support
for the Parish Twinning Program—to get some new parishes twinning
with parishes in Haiti and Latin America.
I don't know how successful I was on that front,
but one of the things I got to do in Atlanta was to visit
the Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. National Historic site.
It has a museum, a national park, his boyhood home,
and Ebenezer Baptist Church which he co-pastored with his father.
Hearing a little bit about Dr. King and his prophetic voice for change in
America and then reading our first reading for Mass this weekend,
I began to think about who are the prophetic voices of our day.
Who have been the prophetic voices in my own life?
And why is it that some prophetic voices like Dr. King's stay with us
while others fade away fairly quickly?

Who are the prophetic voices of today?
Who has been a prophetic voice in my own life?
Why do some of those voice fall away quickly?

I want to start by sharing a little bit about a prophetic voice in my life.
About 15 years ago I was having a conversation with Fr. Michael O'Mara.
Michael was ordained a couple of years before me.
On this particular day he was challenging me to consider developing
a sister parish relationship with a parish in El Salvador.
After talking back and forth for a while, I said to him,
“Michael, there is plenty of mission work to do right here...
I don't need to go to a foreign country to do it.”
Michael thought for a moment...it was as if he was debating on whether or
not to say it...but then he said to me, “You know, Tom, my experience has
been that when people say that...
they usually aren't doing anything in either place.”
Now I was angry when he said it.
And I know I mustered some kind of self-defense,
and I'm sure I believed it at the time,
but now I know, Fr. Michael was right.

Michael was a prophetic voice in my life and one that caused me to look at both what I could be doing and what I should be doing both at home and abroad.

It's interesting about the prophetic voices in our lives.

Almost always they initially make us angry...

And that anger grows stronger until we realize they are right.

So who are the prophetic voices in your life?

Who causes you to think twice about something you are doing... or something you are not doing?

The visit to the Martin Luther King Center also made me wonder why do some voices resonate for years while others fade away rather quickly?

And it seems to me that true prophets do two things:

First, they speak the truth...

(certainly Dr. King did speak the truth about racial injustices)

Secondly, they do it in a godly way...

(I think Dr. King's vision of non-violent civil disobedience modeled on the works of Mahatma Ghandi) is an example of a godly way.

Speaking truth in a godly way is truly a prophetic voice.

So who are the prophets of our day?

Certainly we have them in our own Church...St. Teresa of Calcuta;

St. John Paul II; and our own current pope, Pope Francis...

All speaking the truth in a godly way.

You might remember Malala Yousafzai (U saaf ZI),

the 15 year-old Pakistani girl who encouraged other Muslim teen girls living in a Taliban-controlled area of Pakistan to go to school.

She was shot in the head, but survived and continues to speak out on the need for education to be available to all people.

Truth spoken in a godly way.

I once heard it said that it is the job of a prophet
to comfort the afflicted and to afflict the comfortable.
I think that's true...

Jeremiah reminds us today that being a prophetic voice is not easy.

I would add that listening to prophetic voices are not always easy either.

But I think we would all do well to listen for those prophetic voices
in our lives who challenge us in a godly way to **see the truth**
and **to be a better version of ourselves.**