

St Pius & St Anthony 14th Sunday Ordinary Time Year B2

I'm sure you have all heard of the label "social butterfly" used to describe some exceptionally pleasant personality. I had a classmate in the seminary, whose picture could be in the dictionary under that entry. Social butterflies flutter in and out of conversation, mingle in and out of circles at parties, in stores, on streets or anywhere--that's just it, they can swoop in and out among people as effortlessly as a butterfly coming in for a landing on this flower or maybe that flower--whatever their whims are. He was a wonderful guy, a good soul but he was also 'flighty' that way. Well, I think I've said before that the seminary I went to, served good food (*I know what people say about institutional food being bad-but this place's was good*), and it was common to have people sit around after meals and visit a while (not just a 'dine and dash' event). We used trays as we moved through the serving bar area, (like a cafeteria, trays held your plate, maybe a bowl or saucer, cutlery, cups, etc). Anyway, if you went back to the serving line for seconds, you just grabbed your plate, and left your tray at your place. Now, *Enter my story*. The tables were round and sat six or so people, and someone got up and was off to the buffets from our table, & this most social guy, just plopped down at our table. He took a bite of roll from his 'seconds' saucer, and jumped right into finishing his gripping story (*it's just that we hadn't heard the first part-He wasn't sitting at our table to start with....*) But this went on for a minute and half or so. He didn't miss a beat, engaging all of us in this story that that we didn't have a clue about. Now, of course, everyone in the seminary is nice, right? So, we let him go on, and then a light bulb clicked in him, and you saw his eyebrow go up, and he said, "I wasn't sitting here was I?" I said, 'No, and your table just got cheated out of the ending of a great story!' But he was a wonder! He could do that, just sitting down right among us, and without missing a lick running right along with his tale! I don't think it was a panning view of the table, that made it click for him that he was at the wrong table, it was not having a his tea glass in front of him-the other had only a coffee cup. But he had that amazing gift of conversation and storytelling of social butterflies.

Now, why do I tell this? Well, prophets are not 'social butterflies'. They are mostly not perceived as the 'pleasant presences' as social butterflies are. We certainly hear about Ezekiel's case in our first reading. Wow, God held a little pep rally to toughen him up to face the vehement rejection he would experience from the people of Judah. Ezekiel was sent to crack the shell of their hard hearts, and he was not received well. That happens to prophets – I love how God was preparing him – 'Get ready they are going to reject you' (Eze 2:3-4) it reminds me

of how Jesus prepares His own disciples, telling them, “Don’t take it personally, if they reject me, they’ll reject you!” (Luke 10:16). That’s a plot for prophets to undergo. Almost universally they are rejected, ignored or out-right persecuted. But we reject a true prophet at our own expense. What do we miss out on?

I like the classic definition of a prophet as a person who “disturbs the comfortable—that good troubling of waters” Because prophets tell us what we don’t want to hear. They tell us to get right with God, and who likes to be told they are wrong? Prophets get into our business. Illustrative of prophets’ work, I like the story of the young priest who had a little ‘amen corner’ at mass in the parish he served. It started when he began a morality homily one morning singling out particular sins to preach about their consequences. He started out tackling excessive drinking and its dangers to souls and the amen corner was nodding away and giving ‘amens’. Then he moved on to the waste of gambling and its selfish promise of easy gains, and the spirited ‘amens’ kept on coming. He continued on through a list of sins, with the heads picking up pace and nodding vigorously with ‘amens’. And then the priest said there was one sin to avoid that fed and spread the corruption to others, and it is called “gossiping”, To which the heads of the Amen Corner all stopped nodding, and suddenly burst out, “Hold on now, you have done gone to meddling”. It is righteous until it gets close to us! I’d say the line between prophecy and ‘meddling’ is a fine one. And I suspect that Jesus bumped into that line, which led to His hometown rejection.

I know we often are puzzled by His hometown’s negative reaction to Him. How could they do that? He must have gotten too close to their business? Did they hear Him as prophesying’ or ‘meddling’? I guess good fiery prophecy is going to touch us, get close to our hearts. Jesus must have hit this nerve in His home synagogue that led them to resist him and push him out.

I’d say we all benefit from seeing ourselves on the ‘giving’ end of that rejection at times. Jesus asks something of us that we simply don’t want to do: maybe, be disciplined about offering daily regular prayer (*I like to point out that today’s gospel testifies to Jesus’ regular-**weekly sabbath visits** to synagogues- I see our Sunday obligation in light of Jesus’ pattern of prayer-Luke 4:16 even adds ‘**as was his custom**’!*) or we want to resist Jesus’ call to forgive that neighbor, let go & sell those possessions for the Kingdom, not worry about tomorrow, give to those poor, and love that enemy. When we refuse to apply those commands to ourselves, we reject Him. If we are family (brothers-sisters) to Him, then Jesus offers us a cautionary tale in this episode. We might not be hearing something of His teaching to us; or we might outright be refusing it, even trying to justify our rejection (saying to ourselves, “Well, that was so long ago-it’s different now”, or “Jesus might’ve been

able to do that but he can't expect us to" or "this is not a perfect world"). Whatever our excuse, when we discard His words, we are pushing Him out. We are rejecting Him. The last line of gospel says, "..... So, he was not able to perform any mighty deed there....." (Mark 6:5). That reinforces the 'missing out' that goes on when we reject Him. Our loss! We do not want to miss/lose His grace – so we can learn/gain from their example, and be slower to push back, or turn away when Jesus 'meddles' in our business- our hometown, our own lives? What might Jesus be telling us, that we do not want to hear?