Spirituality
Scripture for Life



People in San Diego line up to be tested for COVID-19 Jan. 4. (CNS/Reuters/Mike Blake)



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We can no longer view the prophetic as a gift and activity reserved for human beings alone. All creation is prophetic because, from a faith perspective, all creation is infused with the prophetic and wise spirit of the divine. Thus, all creation communicates the wonder, the mystery, the complexity, the beauty of the divine as we hear in Psalm 19:1-4:

> The heavens are telling the glory of God;
>
> and the firmament proclaims God's
>
> handiwork.
>
> Day to day pours forth speech,
>
> and night declares knowledge.
>
> There is no speech, nor are there words;
>
> their voice is not heard;
>
> Yet their voice goes out through all the earth,
>
> and their words to the end of the world.

As part of creation, human beings, regardless of status, race, class, orientation, ethnicity, age, ability, gender, religious belief or no belief, have the potential to be prophetic and to act prophetically. Christians, by virtue of their baptism, are anointed into the prophetic tradition and called to embrace and exercise their prophetic charism and vocation.

Fourth Sunday in Ordinary Time

January 30, 2022

Jeremiah 1:4-5, 17-19

Psalm 71

1 Corinthians 12:31-13:13

Luke 4:21-30

This gift invites people everywhere to speak to social, political and religious leadership, to judicial officials, to power brokers, to those involved with a community's economy and well-being. To act prophetically is to work for justice, to align ourselves with humans and nonhumans living on the margins, to de-center and eventually dismantle hegemonic power structures while unseating their hegemonic leaders.

To act prophetically, to expose inequity and discrimination of all types, is noble work that cannot wait.

This Sunday's reading from Jeremiah reminds us that like the character Jeremiah, our prophetic call is to the nations; our prophetic work is to span the globe.

In this current pandemic, we are experiencing the "great reset" of our global economy. The COVID-19 crisis is said to be the cause of political, economic and social disruptions. As we know, the pandemic has exposed the inconsistencies, inadequacies and contradictions of multiple systems.

In reality, however, one needs to ask this question: "Is the pandemic being weaponized by the world's powerful techno-feudal lords as a means to 'reset' the global economy so that the wealthiest of nations and the wealthiest citizens in nations can enrich themselves and flourish at the expense of others' demise and devastation?"

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We need only to tabulate the profit gains of the pharmaceutical industry, the telecommunications and social media giants such as Zoom, Facebook, TikTok, Instagram, the mega-corporations like Amazon. Added into the equation is megabillionaire Richard Branson's Virgin Galactic flight into space complemented by the ongoing and escalating battle between the world's two richest men, Jeff Bezos and Elon Musk, over who will send people into space first.

All of these many gains and efforts are occurring during this present time in history as non-Western nations like Africa sink deeper into poverty, and people around the globe struggle to make ends meet without a just wage afforded to them, in an era of tragic loss with no end in sight.

Who are Judah's kings and princes, priests and people today whom Jeremiah would address in bold and unwavering ways? Where are the prophetic voices and persons addressing the "great reset" now, in a time when "compliance" seems to be the order of the day and loyalty to leadership the revered virtue?

Now, more than ever, Catholic social teaching on economics needs to come into play, but one wonders if even some Catholics supporting media outlets like Eternal Word Television Network, which grossed an annual revenue of $64,946,744 in 2019, are not part of the great corporate economic "reset." The moment is upon us to emerge from isolation, to enter the global arena prophetically, to read critically the signs of the times, and to expose and address the crucial issues of our present realities before the "survival of the fittest" economically, socially, politically and culturally takes shape in a new world order already evolving behind our masked existence.

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The prophetic word is a graced word, and no matter how searing it may be, it always invites transformation.

The Gospel account of Jesus speaking in the synagogue reminds us that prophets are not accepted in their own land. Indeed, political, religious and social leaders want to toss prophets over the cliff because prophets shake up the status quo. For those of us who dare to act prophetically like Jeremiah and Jesus in our world hungering for hope, vision and justice, we have the promise of presence — "I am with you to deliver you," says the holy one, whose power working within us continually empowers us for the work to be done.

Finally, Paul reminds us that love is the greatest of all virtues. At the heart of the prophetic mission is an insatiable love for the divine and all creation, making the work of justice ever more compelling and forever alluring.

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