

14th B July 5, 2015

A sergeant at the Clermont County Jail tells the visitor that the second most dangerous job in the country is a Corrections Officer: he says the average life expectancy of a corrections officer is 58 years.

Maybe the most dangerous occupation is to be a prophet. A prophet isn't someone who foretells the future as much as someone who speaks for God. He or she says, "What you are doing is not right—because this is what God wants!" And of course, people don't want to hear that they have to change, especially if they are powerful. Remember John the Baptist? He was a prophet; he told King Herod it was wrong to live with his brother's wife. John's head ended up on a platter. Speaking the truth to power is a dangerous occupation!

So, when Jesus began to preach, "Repent! Change your ways! You're not doing what God wants!"—well, who wants to hear that??—people wrote Jesus off! Older people in Nazareth said, "He's only a carpenter? What does he know?" "Where's he get all that? He's no better than any of us!" *We will always find a way to write off someone we disagree with.* They even added, "He's the son of Mary"—reminding each other that Mary became pregnant before she lived with Joseph, and maybe someone else was really his father.

Pope Francis' new encyclical on care for the earth, writes that "Climate change...represents one of the principal challenges facing humanity in our day." Immediately, one of the candidates for nomination to be President, a Catholic, responded that the Pope ought to "stay away

from science and stick to religion." People don't like being told they might have to change!

St. Paul writes today about a "thorn in the flesh." Scholars tell us it may have been the constant opposition he faced.

In Mark 3:21, we read that Jesus' own family came to take him away; they thought he was mentally ill. The Scribes claimed he was possessed by the devil.

Trying to speak God's truth is dangerous work: you can lose friends, a pastor can lose parish members, a parent can lose their son or daughter.

On this July 4, a person who tries to say, *"I love this flag as much as you do. But we can be a much better country than we are: why are food pantries empty and homeless shelters full? Why do we imprison the most people in the world? Why we do we execute and abort people?"--that person might be told that they are unpatriotic and ungrateful.*

Prophets don't live long because we all tend to assume that God is like us, that God shares our values. A while back I chatted with a good man who never attends Mass. I asked, "Why don't I see you on Sunday?" He said, "I like your spirituality, but I don't like your politics." I wanted to say (but I didn't because he is bigger than me. Everyone is bigger than me!) I wanted to say, "You know, God is not a Republican. Or a Democrat. Or an American. It's not God's job to be like us. We're supposed to be like God."

Here's Catholic belief: that truth remains true, that truth will always eventually return, that truth will in the end win, that the Truth will set us all free. So, we need prophets: men and women deeply in touch with God. We have plenty of opinions. What we need is prophets who will speak the truth. And the humility to listen to them.