

My Brothers and Sisters,

One of the most beautiful verses in the Old Testament, a verse with which many of us are familiar, is Micah 6:8: *“What is good has been explained to you...this is what God asks of you: only this, to act justly, to love tenderly and to walk humbly with your God...”* Scripture scholars tell us that this verse captures the primary teaching of each of the three previous prophets. The prophet Amos calls us to act justly; the prophet Hosea calls us to love tenderly; and the prophet Isaiah calls us to walk humbly with our God. At Little Flower, one of our favorite hymns is “We Are Called,” which is based on this verse.

Amos was a shepherd and dresser of sycamores from the kingdom of Judah who was called by God to preach in the northern kingdom during the eighth century before Christ. In today’s reading, the priest Amaziah expelled Amos from Bethel because he was challenging the people and making them uncomfortable. Amos responded to Amaziah that he was no prophet nor did he belong to any company of prophets. In other words, he was not a professional prophet, nor did he belong to the prophets’ union. God chose a shepherd and dresser of sycamores to proclaim his word, specifically to denounce injustice.

As we all know, we are living in challenging times. Since Jesus was a prophet, the Church, therefore, must be prophetic. The Church must prophetically address current events and current issues. Because of the divisions within our Church and our society, the challenge is to be prophetic without being political. Unfortunately, if we watch cable news or listen to talk radio, we tend to watch or listen to the channel or channels that confirm what we already believe. Therefore, we sometimes need the Church to challenge our beliefs about current events and current issues, especially justice issues.

At the priests’ convocation in June, Archbishop Thompson told a story from his days as a pastor in Louisville. One Sunday he gave a homily on a divisive issue. As he was walking down to coffee and donuts, a man came up to him and said, “Father, that was a Democrat homily.” Almost at the same time, a woman came up to him on the other side and said, “Father, that was a Republican homily.” At that moment, he knew that he had given a good homily. Both the Democrat and the Republican were challenged; both were made uncomfortable.

Although the Church should not take political sides, it must address issues from the perspective of values. For example, whatever we may think about the current immigration crisis, immigration is a moral issue. In the Old Testament, God could not have been more clear, *“You shall treat the alien who resides with you no differently than the natives born among you; have the same love for him as for yourself; for you too were once aliens in the land of Egypt. I, the LORD, am your God”* [Lev. 19:34]. At the same time, for a nation to be a nation, it needs to have boundaries and borders. However, I think most of us would agree that we have a broken immigration system.

My brothers and sisters, the Church is not only called to be prophetic but also called to be an instrument of healing, peace, and reconciliation. Most of us would agree that there is too much division, polarization, and even demonization within our society and our Church. The challenge for the Church, then, is how to be both prophetic and at the same time an instrument of healing, peace, and reconciliation because there cannot be peace without justice. As for us, *“this is what God asks of [us]: only this, to act justly, to love tenderly and to walk humbly with [our] God...”*