



## From the Pastor's Desk

***“Thus says the Lord: You, son of man, I have appointed watchman for the house of Israel; when you hear Me say anything, you shall warn them for Me.”***

This quote comes from our first reading this Sunday when God also warned the prophet Ezekiel that if he did not warn people about their wickedness then ***“the wicked shall die for his guilt, but I will hold you responsible for his death.”*** All the readings from this Sunday carry a similar message. St. Paul says that obeying the commandments is the way we show love to our neighbors, ***“hence, love is the fulfillment of the law.”***

We all have a prophetic office by our baptism which includes the spiritual work of mercy that perhaps we are least inclined to want to practice; “admonishing the sinner.” It is quite a balancing act to practice this work of mercy for we are all sinners and have beams in our own eyes. Yet out of love for others we do lovingly correct even though we, too, are the walking wounded. A smoker who hasn’t quit the habit yet will often refuse a cigarette to someone who is trying to quit because they know it isn’t a good habit and they care about the other person.

The Church is praised by the world for certain good things we remind it to do and evil things to avoid. When we offer services to the poor and encourage others to do so we are praised and might even make a positive story on the cover of a newspaper. When we speak about the need to be good stewards of the environment or against the sin of racism, we will receive approving nods from secular and social media. To be clear, these are important issues that we often fail to live up to. But they are not prophetic in the sense that we will risk the public ire as the prophets did for their witness. Nobody gets angry at the dentist for reminding them to floss more even if they are challenged by the reminder.

However, there are certain teachings of Christ and His Church that when we speak boldly about them will win us castigation not applause.

The great Archbishop Fulton J. Sheen multiple times shared a prescient story from the tumultuous 1960’s that speaks to our own times. He was invited to speak at a university where two days before, students burned down two campus buildings apparently hoping to bring about social reform. Sheen was warned by the university president of this but rather than cancel his talk, he changed it, and spoke to the students for one hour about chastity, “in a way that they could understand.” The president was dumbfounded that the talk was well received as the student’s response was never seen before. The Archbishop did not go down to their level but challenged them.

I once gave a homily on chastity at my first assignment in a way people could understand and the mother of a fifteen year old girl told me after Mass that her daughter said it was a good homily but then these stinging words, *“most priests are too afraid to talk about things like that.”* How true for me, too, and the whole Church.

Friends, there are those would bring about social reform through violence and the destruction of the nuclear family which would only make this country a hell on earth. But the best way to make this country safer, more just, and fruitful is to encourage loving, committed marriages between one man and one woman, to promote the self-mastery of chastity and abstinence. Every human being matters to God and has rights, including the unborn and the elderly. Let’s not be afraid to live and to witness to the beauty of God’s commandments, specifically around sexual morality. Following the Church’s teachings that come from Christ, brings us peace and joy, makes the world a better place, and keeps open the path to eternal life besides.

May we be prophetic!  
Fr. Mike

