

For Sunday, December 6, 2015

## The Prophetic Voice

2nd Sunday of Advent

<http://new.usccb.org/bible/readings/120615.cfm>

Baruch 5:1-9

Philippians 1:4-6, 8-11

Luke 3:1-6

John the Baptist is one of the towering figures in the Advent drama. Following in the tradition of the prophets, he closes out the Old Testament and heralds the New with his cry: “Prepare the way of the Lord, make straight his paths.”

While our popular culture understands a prophet to be someone who predicts the future, the Bible presents the prophet as one who speaks the word of God by interpreting the signs of the time, often making us uncomfortable in the process.

Are there still prophets in our day? Are there still figures in our culture who speak a word to challenge our presuppositions and make us squirm?

Let me suggest a few persons who, while not prophets themselves, might help us to understand how they might have been perceived by the people of their day.

The first would be [Kim Davis](#), the county clerk in Kentucky who refused to sign marriage licenses for same-sex couples. Her long, straggly hair might already give us an idea of the impression John the Baptist would have made in his camel hair garments. Because of her [four marriages](#), her stand for traditional marriage has been criticized as hypocritical. However, Jesus chose the Samaritan woman to evangelize the people of Sychar even though she had been married five times and was living with a man who was not her husband. In the prophetic tradition, God chooses those whom the world considers weak and foolish to shame those who self-righteously assert that they are on “the right side of history” and who would judge anyone who disagrees with them to be “bigots.”

A second controversial figure is [Donald Trump](#). His ongoing popularity despite making the most outrageous statements bewilders pundits and strategists alike. Journalists who are used to hobbling presidential campaigns by repeating a candidate’s unwise or untimely turns of phrase are at a loss to explain his appeal. Because of his power to draw viewers, no amount of protests can keep him off talk shows, news programs, or even late night comedy shows. No matter how we may judge his rhetoric or fear his populist demagoguery, there is no doubt that he has struck a nerve. Voters have grown tired of the measured phrases and focus-group-tested words commonly used by their politicians. At the same time, they have grown [mistrustful of the media](#) whom they judge to be more interested in politicizing events than presenting the facts. All this has



*Prophet of the Most High*

combined to make Donald Trump the front-runner for the Republican presidential nomination and to make the political establishment very uncomfortable.

And, I would offer a third figure, [Bill Maher](#). This stand-up comedian turned political commentator makes no apologies for his contempt for religious belief. In his movie, [Religulous](#), he claims that all religions are based on myth, are incompatible with science, and lead inevitably to conflict and war. Though his beliefs are based on mischaracterizations of faith and its relationship to reason and ignorance on how most Christians interpret the Bible, he does challenge people of faith who want to contribute to public policy to bring arguments to the debate based on reason and experience and not on faith and the Bible. And he challenges us to make our teaching relevant to a culture that embraces evolution and science as dogmatically as we embrace revelation and theology.

Now, I don't mean to suggest that every offensive or challenging word is prophetic or that prophets are incapable of comforting us as well. However, prophets were almost without exception all put to death because they unsettled those in authority or disrupted popular practices. We must also be aware that the prophetic word often issues forth from the most unlikely of mouthpieces. To hear God's word, we must constantly put aside our biases and pay strict attention to those messages and messengers who irritate us. There might just be a word there from God that, if we embrace it, will fill in our valleys and make our crooked ways straight.

*Douglas Sousa, STL*

## PRAYER

In the lonely places  
The wilderness  
Where we stand forlorn  
Windswept and alone  
Your voice calls out  
Prepare a way for the Lord  
In the dark places  
The shadows  
Where we hide our fears  
Embrace our tears  
Your voice calls out

### **Prepare a way for the Lord**

As the rising sun comes to us each dawn  
**Shine upon those who live in darkness**  
That all might know the joy of our salvation  
**The forgiveness of sins**  
And your great mercy

For the desert places in which we walk  
The streets we roam  
The paths we cross  
Guide our feet  
Take us to places  
Where you would go  
Give us words that you would use  
That in this Advent season  
Of promise and preparation  
We might point the way with John the Baptist  
To the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world!

—Advent prayer taken from [www.faithandworship.com/Advent/Advent\\_John\\_the\\_Baptist.htm](http://www.faithandworship.com/Advent/Advent_John_the_Baptist.htm) (Creative Commons License: <http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/3.0/>).

# NOTICES

## RELIGIOUS FUND FOR RETIREMENT COLLECTION

The Retirement Fund for Religious provides support for thousands of elderly Catholic sisters, brothers, and religious order priests. The national collection will be held in most US Catholic parishes the weekend of December 12–13, 2015. To learn more about the collection and download materials for the campaign, visit [www.RetiredReligious.org/resources/](http://www.RetiredReligious.org/resources/).

## ADVENT RESOURCES FROM THE USCCB

The USCCB will once again have an online daily calendar for the Advent–Christmas season. You will want to share this information with parish members, school and religious education staffs, and other interested parties. The online calendar can be found at: [www.usccb.org/prayer-and-worship/liturgical-year/advent/index.cfm](http://www.usccb.org/prayer-and-worship/liturgical-year/advent/index.cfm).

A PDF version of the calendar is also available:

[www.usccb.org/prayer-and-worship/liturgical-year/advent/upload/advent-calendar.pdf](http://www.usccb.org/prayer-and-worship/liturgical-year/advent/upload/advent-calendar.pdf).

## HOLY YEAR OF MERCY RESOURCES

The Holy Year of Mercy begins on December 8, 2015, the feast of the Immaculate Conception. For resources to help celebrate this Extraordinary Jubilee, visit the USCCB's resource page at [www.usccb.org/beliefs-and-teachings/how-we-teach/new-evangelization/jubilee-of-mercy/index.cfm](http://www.usccb.org/beliefs-and-teachings/how-we-teach/new-evangelization/jubilee-of-mercy/index.cfm). Additional artwork is available to LPi customers on the Art & Media Portal. [Click here](#) to view now.

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