

Reading: [Fifteenth Sunday in Ordinary Time | USCCB](#)

***Have you ever felt embarrassed to talk about Jesus?***

In high school I had a protestant friend who was very open about his faith... in conversations he would say things like “I’ll pray for your studies” when he knew I had a test coming up. I found it intriguing, he spoke so naturally and confidently about his faith.

At that time I was 16 and was developing a relationship with Jesus myself so occasionally I would have little side conversations with him about it. He was so encouraging and would invite me to church and bible study.

One time while hanging out with our group of friends the topic of faith came up... I think one person was poking fun of believers and my friend simply said something so eloquent, it went something like: “*well, I am a believer, I am a Christian, Jesus is my personal Lord and Savior and I believe my existence has a purpose and God will help me discover what that is...*” Everyone stared at each other momentarily before beginning to laugh. He looked at me with a gaze that was begging for me to say something, to share what I had shared with him, to back him up and stand up for the Christ I was discovering... but I didn’t... I couldn’t... I felt ***embarrassed, insecure***... so I nervously started to laugh along with the others.

***Have you ever felt embarrassed to speak about your faith?***

I think many people, especially Catholics, have... I often hear “father, I don’t want to be judged, ridiculed or unpopular... I don’t want to offend anyone... I don’t want to make people feel uncomfortable... I don’t want others to think they can’t joke around with me or suddenly treat me differently... I don’t want to lose friends...” or simply, “I don’t know how... I don’t know what to say.”

We all have our own insecurities that play a role in how comfortable or uncomfortable we are when it comes to speaking about our faith. A major insecurity many of us share in common is that lack the language to speak about God at a personal level. We know our catholic churchy lingo: sacraments, eucharist, baptism, parish, confession, first communion... we are very familiar with our rituals, we come to mass, but we seldom think about ***what it all means to me.***

What does your faith, what does being a Christian, ***mean to you?*** It’s a serious question... ***What difference does Jesus make in your life?*** How comfortable would you feel expressing the answer to a stranger, a friend, or family member?

Regardless of our comfort level, that is what God asks of us... it is part of what it means to be a ***prophet.*** We’ve all heard this “***You are called to be a prophet! It’s part of you baptismal call!***” We hear this and are not sure what to do

with it so we just say “well that nice... I’m just going to put this prophet thing on the side right here, there we go... all is good...” Ans we move on.

***What is a prophet?*** Sounds daunting, so official, intimidating, or so out of touch with our own experience because we mostly associate that word with people in the Old Testament, so it is difficult for us to relate.

It’s actually very simple... a prophet is someone who carries their experience of God, the Word of God, in their tongue ***ready to be shared at any moment, in any circumstance, with anyone...*** that’s a word of encouragement, hope, a word of warning, a word of praise... That’s it!

We have thought of prophets as something so complicated that we come up with excuses as to why that doesn’t apply to us... *I don’t know the bible well... I don’t have a strong prayer life... my vices and sins are too great I am anything but holy... I don’t know how to speak eloquently...* In other words, we conclude that we are not good enough and end up feeling insecure about our faith, which means that when an opportunity arises to share your faith, you end up too embarrassed to say something... and then we feel bad for being embarrassed about God... which just seems to affirm our conclusion that we are just not good enough, and our confidence fades away even more... it’s a vicious cycle.

You know... God is deeply concerned with our insecurities, because our lack of self-confidence always results in a lack of confidence in God, and when I can't trust God, then I become an obstacle to the power of God's Word in my own life, and the life of others... it is impossible to see ourselves as prophets.

To help us overcome this insecurity, God risks choosing the most unprepared people to do great things... Moses was insecure about his speech impediment. Abraham was insecure about his old age. Jeremiah was insecure about being a teen. Amos from the first reading was insecure about being a shepherd... the disciples whom Jesus chose, they themselves had their own sets of insecurities... just a fisher man, just a tax collector...

Like us, they were filled with excuses: none of them thought they were good enough... yet time and time again God said: do not say "I am too young, or too old, or not articulate..." *I will give you the words to speak... I will instruct you... I will strengthen you... if you don't have confidence in yourself, **then have confidence in me...and what I can do.***"

These stories are evidence of how much God fighting for us, fighting for you, risking it all, putting it all on the line in human weakness to build up your confidence so that you may realize: "***you are good enough***, because ***I have made***

*you good enough.*” Hence why Jesus is so detailed with instructing the disciples as he sent them out... he was building their confidence.

At those words, what excuse is left? When faced with the power of God, what insecurity can stand? God today is fighting to give you the confidence to be a prophet, to do what at 16, and even sometimes today, I could not do: speak of the power of God our lives, and in doing so, allow the power of God’s word become a blessing to someone else.

When I witnessed my friend share his faith openly, even when others ridiculed him and in embarrassment I joined in, the power of his testimony did something in me... it challenged me, it forced me to recognize my own insecurities and over time, that experience has been pushing me to grow in confidence in what God is doing in my life. Even as a priest, it’s still a struggle sometimes...

Just last week I was at home depot when I heard my name... it was another old high school friend I had not seen since graduation, he of the Sikh faith tradition from India and wore a turbine. We chatted a little bit as we told each other what we did. When I told him I was a priest, he said: *wow, can you pray to God for me? I am having a rough time.* I was surprised... and to be honest, if he would have told me that he was having a hard time but didn’t ask me to pray for him, I don’t think I

would have offered to pray for him because I would have felt uncomfortable knowing we were of different faith traditions... yet, here he was, putting me to shame without even knowing it... helping me realize I still need to work on my courage... I need to stop being an obstacle to God's grace and simply share...

Dare to be a prophet. This week, if someone shares a difficulty with you, say "I will pray for you." If you are feeling extra edgy, offer a simple prayer there on the spot for them (I need to practice that one myself...) If someone shares a joyful moment with you, say "praise God." Dare to ask someone to pray for you. Invite someone to church... if the cash register asks how, you are doing, say "Good by the grace of God." Don't be afraid of saying "God bless you." Think about how you would answer the following question: *what does your faith mean to you?* And say it out loud to yourself until it becomes natural, an elevator pitch ready to be shared.

If you are someone who struggles with sharing your faith: if you find it embarrassing, difficult, allow me to be a prophetic voice for you today: *you are good enough for God*, and people need to be blessed by the power of God's word in you.