

Serving Berlin's English-speaking Catholic Community since 1957



Catholic Community

Member of the English-Speaking Mission

Mass: Fridays at 6 p.m. in the Blessed Sacrament Chapel

Sundays at 10 a.m. in the main Sanctuary

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Office Hours: Mondays and Thursdays 10:00-12:00

July 22nd, 2018 – Sixteenth Sunday in Ordinary Time

Celebrant: Fr. Wolfgang Schonecke, MAfr

Readings (Missal no. 899): Jer 23:1-6 • Ps 23:1-3, 3-4, 5, 6 • Eph 2:13-18 • Mk 6:30-34

Amos - a person thrown out of organized religion announced God's will

Even if you do not know the Bible too well, you will quickly discover that prophets have problems with religious leaders and that religious leaders have problems with prophets.

The reading from the prophet Amos (7, 12-15) describes a classic confrontation between the two, between the prophet and the religious leader. In the Bible, listening to prophets is the most acceptable way of finding out God's will in one's life. Religious and civil leaders often do not like what God has to say to his people. So, religious and civil leaders eventually develop a method to avoid this process of listening to God's word. In the Old Testament, Kings and priests created a system of "shrine and court prophets": people on the payroll of the kings and priests. They regularly consulted these prophets to find out Yahweh's will for them. These shrine and court prophets "*ate at the table of the king or of the priest*" – no wonder that their oracles almost always were what their employers wanted to hear.

That is part of the background for today's Amaziah - Amos encounter. Bethel's high priest Amaziah is trying to rid his shrine of its worst critic. Amos bothers him too much: he not only uncovered the religious superficiality of such holy places, he insisted its clientele stay away. Everyone, including Amaziah, heard Amos' sarcastic command some chapters before: "*Come to Bethel and sin!*" – Bethel is where our story takes place. No wonder Amaziah, the priest, is so determined to rid Bethel of Amos. He is the biggest threat to Amaziah and to the shrine religion he personifies. That's why Amos responds with the unbelievable statement, "*I am no prophet!*" It doesn't mean what it implies: Amos is simply reminding Amaziah that he is not *his* prophet.

The reading says: "*The Lord (not Amaziah) took me from following the flock and said to me, 'Go, prophesy to my people Israel!'*" The most ridiculous part of Amaziah's tirade, of his attack on Amos is his proposal, "Amos, go away from Israel, *earn your bread prophesying (in Judah)!*" One of the rules for distinguishing real prophets from false prophets revolves around the fact that real prophets never profit from prophesying. Who in their right mind would pay someone like a prophet? Pay a prophet for telling them the same things they had stopped their consciences from telling them over the years?

Prophets are known for their next-to-poverty lifestyles. Religious leaders who live a wealthy life will not dare tell us about God's will; it would clash with their own behavior. Things really haven't changed much over the last 2,700 years, since the story of Amaziah and Amos. When anyone claims to be God's mouthpiece, there are a lot of questions to ask. In Amos' case, it was the person thrown out of organized religion who actually gave us God's will, not the representative of organized religion.

This might help us to welcome men and women as prophets who are not official church representatives, but who convey the message of God's unconditional love for us, the message of Jesus.

cf. Roger Vermaalen Karban, <http://www.fosilonline.com>

July 29th 10:00 a.m.: Mass: Celebrant Fr. Wolfgang Felber

Lector: NN • Eucharistic Ministers: Johannes Ploog, Heide Doblhofer, Thomas Schmidt •
Greeter: Buck Chisolm • Altar Servers: Konrad Giersdorf, Buck Chisolm • Hospitality: NN •
Designated collection: All Saints

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