

- Today's first reading comes from one of the four major prophets of the Old Testament: Jeremiah. Jeremiah was called to be a prophet at a relatively young age, but it was not a career that he sought out. In fact, he entered into this role with a lot of trepidation.
 - He lived in the 6th c. BC during the time that the Neo-Babylonian Empire really began to be a threat to the Israelites, and he was God's messenger to the Israelites of that time that if they didn't amend their sinful ways, Jerusalem was going to be destroyed.
 - As you might imagine, Jeremiah wasn't exactly popular amongst some of his fellow Jews, and he was imprisoned and tortured, publicly ridiculed, and exiled to Egypt where it's believed he eventually died.
 - Yet through all his sufferings, he never lost confidence in God. Jeremiah always had faith that God would save him – if not in this life, then certainly in the next.
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- The word *prophet*, which is Greek, means to speak on behalf of someone, and in biblical usage it always means speaking on behalf of God.
 - In a biblical sense being a prophet has nothing to do with predicting the future, but rather with being chosen by God to be His spokesperson and servant in a certain time and place.
 - While the line of prophets announcing the coming of the Messiah ended with John the Baptist, the Church still possesses a prophetic charism and mission. And this prophetic mission belongs to all the baptized, whether we be priests, religious or laity.
 - Of course, we're living in a time in which the good news of the Gospel is often marginalized and disregarded in society. As we prepare to celebrate the 250th anniversary of our nation's founding, we're no longer "one nation under God."
 - Instead, we must contend with the fact that many of our nation's greatest powerbrokers believe that killing an unborn child is a sacred right, that people can determine their own sex, that divorce should be easy, and that homosexual acts should be guarded with the very same protections as traditional marriage – hardly Gospel values.
 - And for every Charlie Kirk out there who boldly takes on the lies constantly peddled by the left, proclaiming the commonsense truths that our faith has always championed, there are 10 others who would kill the faithful prophets of our age to protect their lies. It's demonic.
 - Truly, as St. Peter tells us in his first epistle, our adversary, the devil, is going about like a roaring lion seeking whom he may devour. But in that marvelous passage, St. Peter doesn't tell us to run and hide. No, he tells us to resist the devil and to be strong in faith.
 - More than ever, people of faith must stand up to the evils plaguing our society. What we need now more than ever are prophets: men and women of valor who, moved by God's Holy Spirit and imbued with His grace, stand up and speak the truth without counting the cost.
 - Of course, being a prophet is no easy job; it never has been. The Old Testament is full of stories of the prophets God sent to convert Israel and to announce the coming Messiah, and of all that they suffered to fulfill God's will and preach His word.
 - Our first reading today gives a sense of what Jeremiah suffered and endured, but also of the hopeful optimism and confidence in God that marked his personality.
 - He sees God as his champion, and Jeremiah knows that in the end God will always prevail. His attitude of faith in God is one we must adopt as our own.

- Truly, my friends, we're living in an era requiring great faith in God, *heroic* faith. And we must fear no one, trusting that there's nothing concealed that will not be revealed, no dark secrets that will not be brought into God's holy light, as today's Gospel proclaims.
- In His Sermon on the Mount, Jesus tells us that we are called to be both salt and light in the world. As we all know, salt is used to enhance the flavor of food and to act as a preservative.
- In the same way, we who are followers of Christ are called to influence the world for the better by our prophetic witness to Christ and His Gospel. We are called to blend into the world in order to bring out and protect the goodness of humanity.
- In telling us to be light, Jesus is calling us shine the light of truth on the world, which is so often shrouded in the darkness of sin and is ruled by those who serve the prince of darkness.
- As Christians we are called to live our lives in such a way that it is obvious to those around us that we are indeed followers of Christ. In our own small ways, each of us is called to be a prophet of God's love, mercy and goodness, and the truth of our Catholic faith.
- Yet as the evil one appears to get a firmer grasp on the world, more and more Christians are going to be called to speak and act prophetically in very public ways. We each have to be ready for that. We have to allow the Holy Spirit to inspire us, move us, and work through us.
- This begins in our daily prayer. It's in prayer that we come to hear God's voice and that we're given the graces necessary to fulfill His will. As we pray, we desire to grow in virtue. And as we try to practice virtue in our daily life, our desire prayer is strengthened.
- On a practical level, the best way to be a prophet in our society is simply to follow the Church's teachings re: marriage and family, and the sanctity of life and its transmission.
- Refusing to cohabit and remaining chaste until marriage, being open to kids by avoiding the evils of contraception, seeking to adopt rather than cooperating with the devilishness of IVF if natural conception is impossible – all are wonderful witnesses in our world today.
- All of these actions state very clearly that life and the conjugal act that creates life are sacred and should be protected and nurtured from all threats.
- As we face the difficulties that come with being a prophet to the value of life, we must turn to today's Gospel, which provides encouragement in giving prophetic witness to the world.
- In this passage our Lord makes three essential points that are important for us to bear in mind as we live out our prophetic mission.
- First, our Lord tells us not to fear those who can harm us in this life. In the end what matters most is our salvation, and thus we should only fear losing our salvation.
- Secondly, Christ reminds us today of the very caring nature of God's love for us. His love extends to the smallest details of our lives – even to the number of hairs on our head! If in His care for us He allows us to suffer for Him, that's all to our eternal benefit.
- Lastly, Jesus reminds us that if we bear witness to Him and acknowledge Him in this life, He will acknowledge us on Judgment Day. But if we deny Him, He will deny us.
- Brothers and sisters, all of us are called to be prophets in world so that the truths of the Gospel can be made known to all people. The stakes are high. Eternal salvation is on the line for ourselves and for those to whom we witness.
- Let us pray to the Holy Spirit that we can all be courageous witnesses for our Lord, and trust that in bearing witness to God's truth in this life, we may experience the fullness of His love and mercy in the next.