



Pope Francis greets a group of young migrants from Florence during his general audience in St. Peter's Square at the Vatican April 11. The sign is Italian says "No one is a foreigner." (CNS/Paul Haring)



by Thomas Gumbleton

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I think that we are probably somewhat shocked at first in Ezekiel when God sent him very specifically to the people to bring God's message to them, and they rejected him; they wouldn't listen. Yet Ezekiel was encouraged by God to continue to be that prophet among them because God said to Ezekiel, "Even if they won't listen...at least they'll know that there's been a prophet among them." But then even more shocking is the Gospel, isn't it?

Fourteenth Sunday in Ordinary Time

[July 8, 2018](#)

Ezekiel 2:2-5

Psalms 123

2 Corinthians 12:7-10

Mark 6:1-6

Jesus comes back to his own town, his village of Nazareth. When he goes to the synagogue and preaches, the people are shocked and upset: "Who is he? Where does he get all this? After all, he's just a carpenter's son and we know his family — his brothers and sisters, his mother. Who is he?" They wouldn't listen; they turned away. Here, too, Jesus says, "Even though they will not listen and I cannot do any miracles among them, I will continue to preach," and he does.

Now when we reflect on this, and as I said, I think we might be somewhat shocked, wouldn't everyone welcome a prophet? Wouldn't they want to hear God's word, especially spoken by the Son of God himself? We think they would. But then perhaps we should bring this home. Are we willing to hear prophets in our midst? I think right now we're very blessed in our church because (and it hasn't always been true in history) the bishop of Rome, Pope Francis, is truly a prophet. He's speaking God's word about issues that are very important in our world.

You may remember a couple of years ago he published an encyclical letter about one of the most critical issues that faces our planet. He published an encyclical letter warning us about what will happen if we don't change our ways in the way we

respect and nurture the planet God has given to us. That encyclical letter, *Laudato Si'*, is an amazing document and is truly prophetic, speaking to an issue that is so important. Yet there are still many that refuse to accept the message, and we still plunder our planet and are continuing to destroy it.

Perhaps we are like those people to whom Ezekiel went, or the people of Nazareth. We're not ready to listen. Another issue, of course, is that of welcoming strangers into our midst. Jesus, in his own life, you may remember, had to flee his village, go to another country as a refugee because of the violence that was threatened against him. The same thing happens here. Are we ready to accept those people fleeing violence and risking their very lives? How do we treat them? Do we treat them like we say we would treat Jesus? I don't think so.

Pope Francis, again, has given us extraordinary teaching on this. Not only that, he's given us an example. When he went to the Middle East, he brought back refugees with him to save their lives—truly a prophetic act. Are we ready to listen? Are we ready to follow? So when we listen to the lessons today, it's important to not just say, "Those people were so blind. Why didn't they know Ezekiel was a great prophet? How could they not know Jesus was a prophet and reject him?"

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We might have to ask ourselves, "Are we somebody like them? Are we ready to hear God's word spoken to us by a prophet, the bishop of Rome, Pope Francis? Are we willing to change our lives if necessary?"

These are hard words and perhaps we will say no. But then just like the people at the time of Ezekiel, as God said to them, through Ezekiel, "We will know there's been a prophet in our midst when the disaster comes, when we fail to heed the word of God spoken to us." Prophecy sometimes is hard to accept, so we need to pray that we can be open and ready to listen and to heed the prophet God sends to us, the bishop of Rome, Pope Francis.

[Homily given July 8 at St. Anne Church, Frankfort, Michigan. The transcripts of Bishop Thomas Gumbleton's homilies are [posted weekly](#) to NCRonline.org. [Sign up here](#) to receive an email alert when the latest homily is posted.]