

PROPHECIES FIT THE TIMES

July 14, 2019

Today our rector Sid Symington is at Chatauqua where he has the option to attend a teaching by Father Richard Rohr in the morning, a play or a dance performance in the afternoon, and an opera in the evening. Or he could lounge on the lawn, go for a sail in the lake, ride a bicycle around the fairly large Chatauqua grounds, or read a book.

In preparation for his absence he has arranged for the various Morning Prayer officiants and homily volunteers to carry on in his absence. Last week we had Roger Ludin and Lynn Enns. Since Lenny and I are here, it comes as no surprise that he asked me to talk to you and Lenny to lead our prayers today.

Have you ever wondered how Sid comes up with a sermon every week? That's every week except for the rare weeks when he isn't here. If you think it's a simple task, or even if you yourself desire to expand on some bit of scripture, then please tell Sid that you would like a turn to deliver a homily the next time he's gone.

Ideally the homily is at least symbolically grounded in the day's scripture: the Old Testament, the Psalm, or the Gospel. There's not much that can be said about the kindly Samaritan in today's Gospel lesson that hasn't been said many times. A good dude does a good turn.

Meanwhile, in the Old Testament lesson, Amos prophecies bad news for Israel, "Therefore thus says the Lord: Your wife shall become a prostitute in

the city, your sons and daughters shall fall by the sword, your land shall be parceled out by line, and you shall die in an unclean land”

It seems that Old Testament prophecies have a habit of turning out to actually happen.

As for modern day prophecies, there is a tendency for them to not happen. Many street corner prophets forecasting the end of the world and many politicians proclaiming they have the solution to all the troubles have led us to the point that we mostly ignore them.

But perhaps the prophecies we need to heed in these times, with the flood of news commentaries and the posts on facebook, are the events that seem unrelated to the daily flood of noise.

Something prophetic happened on this day in modern times that truly told of events to follow.

It wasn't on July 14, 1911 when an aviator named Harry Atwood landed his plane on the White House lawn... without getting shot. He had been invited there by President William Taft to receive a presidential commendation. That's not the sort of arrival that could take place today without a lot of gun fire.

Not that. I refer to an event on this date in 1789, in Paris. That summer food shortages and high taxes led to the deployment of troops to keep order. Adding to those disagreeable circumstances, the king sought the resignation of a popular finance minister and the people feared the king would order the military to round up those who complained about the situation. A bunch of them gathered at the *Hotel des Invalides* where they broke in and looted firearms and cannons. Then, thus armed and without ammunition, they

thronged to the ancient and vastly uncomfortable Bastille prison to find gunpowder. They stormed the prison and broke open the gates. The few prisoners held there escaped while the crowd overwhelmed the guards, officers, and governor to obtain the gunpowder.

With those thoughts in mind, we can see the actions of the Paris mob as a message, if not from God, at least the equivalent of Amos's prophesy to the people of Israel; a message that king Louis XVI would have been best to heed. Had he done that, and abdicated, the chaos of the French Revolution would have begun sooner but he and his family would have escaped the sharp blade of the guillotine.

The American Revolution had many and gradually more forceful prophets, who, like Amos, warned a king. They warned of the need to allow the colonies representation in Parliament. In response to the repeated lack of action to allow representation over many years, the individual colonists and colonial governments began communicating with one another to provide a more unified voice to their protests and for years and years the Parliament and the king ignored each repeated request. And in our first years at school we all learned the result, the event we celebrated ten days ago.

In France, prophesy was an event. In British Colonial America there were many prophets. The king in France could have understood the significance of the Storming of the Bastille and acted but did not. Perhaps he needed more time, such as that given the king of England. In the American instance there were both the prophets and a gradually increasing intensity of actual events and still the king did not relent.

A prophesy can be both an event and a proclamation; even a series of proclamations and events.

Such as the a halo of prophecies that have been consistent for 50 or more years and which, for at least twenty years have increasingly exhibited manifestations of the reality of these prophecies.

It was 47 years ago, in 1972, that the prophesy first came to my ears. I was living in San Diego and found myself in a group of friends who met every month or so to share food and then sit around on the floor talking about any topic that came up. One of the men, a physicist who worked for a research company, was talking about pollution. He explained that not only was pollution bad for our health, it was creating a greenhouse effect. When asked what he meant he told that, just as in a greenhouse, where the sun comes in and warms the air, it will be a lot warmer in the greenhouse than it is outside. Pollution, he said, is acting like the glass of the greenhouse, allowing radiant energy from the sun to warm the earth but limiting the ability of the heat from the earth to radiate back into space, so the earth is gradually becoming warmer.

Now we all know how this is causing problems for us. It's as if Amos were alive on earth in the 20th century and we, here, in the 21st century, are beginning to experience the fate that has been foreseen.

Not every prophet or prophetic event lived or took place in Biblical times or in 1773 or in 1798.