



LEARN FROM HISTORY --- AVOID THE SAME MISTAKES

Eavesdropping. Where does that word come from? How did it get to mean what it does? Well, since it is not an illegal activity, let's do a little. Let's listen to the conversations in today's first reading and the Gospel.

The plot thickens as we listen. In the first reading, we hear a wise man bemoan how people are plotting and scheming to silence "the just one" permanently. And they not only feel no qualms about their plans but glibly justify them, assuring themselves that, if God didn't want them to happen, he would prevent them. The schemers are following the time-honored strategy: "If you don't like the message, kill the messenger."

The plot thrives and moves ahead into Jesus' time and our time. Jesus in his preaching cited to the scribes and Pharisees how their ancestors carried out this strategy, no doubt hoping that they would determine to learn from their mistake and not repeat it. Are we guilty of the same pattern? Someone has said that we prefer our prophets dead and our politicians alive. Prophets are "so yesterday." We don't regard any of our contemporaries as being prophets-people like Martin Luther King, Dorothy Day, Mother Teresa of Calcutta, Mahatma Gandhi, Pope Paul VI. We overlook our baptismal calling as priests, prophets and kings.

In the Gospel, Jesus tells the apostles that he is aware that there is a plot to silence him by putting him to death and he realizes that they will succeed, sooner rather than later. The disciples disregard Jesus' comments. They wish he would change the topic-so they change it. If the disciples weren't paying attention to Jesus' words, he apparently heard bits of their talk and asks what they were discussing?

Jesus brings a child before their eyes, a visual aid of how his disciples should see themselves. Be like a child-not seeking power, prestige, lording it over someone-is the point he is making. Jesus sought to assure his disciples and to be assured by them. In talking about his approaching arrest and death, Jesus was trying to forewarn them. But was he also likely looking for a response that would bolster his own spirits? Being a prophet entails not only denouncing injustices and all sorts of social problems but also encouraging others who are struggling or suffering. Remember when Jesus tells his followers that they can expect to be arrested, dragged off to jail and accused for being Christians. But they need not worry. The Holy Spirit will speak for them.

No doubt Jesus expects us to do some prophet work ourselves: speak out against injustice, take action in meeting needs of those being persecuted and neglected. Does he look for some of our "propheting" role to encourage efforts on behalf of peace and justice? Always remember we are not alone. The same Holy Spirit who inspired and guided the prophets of old is there to help us.



*Whoever receives one child such as this in my name,
receives me.....Mark 9:30-37*