

Hey, don't kill the messenger!

We've all heard that saying before . . . and maybe we've said it

ourselves. And we most likely know the origin of the saying.

A power or authority would send a messenger to someone and if

the message was not liked or welcomed they might just kill

the messenger on the spot.

St. John the Baptist was a messenger. Actually he was "The"

messenger. It was Jesus who called John the greatest man ever

born. (None greater). But in the end there were those who didn't

want to hear his message . . . and they killed him.

What was this message that got such a response . . . and who was the

authority that sent it?

The Authority was God. And the message was to prepare the way of

the Lord. The message was to repent of all wrongdoing and make

a straight path for the Lord . . . because the Promised One of God

was among them and about to be revealed.

This message stirred hope in many hearts . . . in others . . . fear.

Upon hearing John, many were anxious for the Great Light that would illuminate the darkness that had filled the world. For the first time in the lives of many there was hope of more than a life of subsistence . . . and there was hope of an eternal life where people would not have to struggle but would find justice and peace under the rule of God.

But there were those as well who had carved out a life of privilege in this world . . . a life where bodily needs were well met and there was surplus wealth and pleasure and power. For these people John was a danger. His message threatened their comfort . . . their position . . . and the way they had come to get along in this world.

John was calling all to an awareness of God and of self. He was ushering in One who would topple all power structures, remove class distinctions, and call everyone to contrition before God. The Promised one had arrived and He would level the field . . .

. . . And for bringing this message John would lose his life.

We know the story of Herodias, the wife of Herod the Great,

who would not stand for John's condemnation of her adulterous marriage . . . a condemnation that was chiseled into a stone tablet by the Hand of God and given to Moses a thousand years before John reminded the Jewish world of the laws of God! Herodias laid a trap for her husband's pride and had John beheaded.

John was God's messenger. He spoke the Truth. And they killed him for it. We know that those who did this were wrong.

Killing the messenger of God was wrong.

We know this without a doubt. And perhaps we ponder it and think that we might have done things differently ourselves.

And perhaps we would have.

But we have the advantage of hindsight and we look through a lens that allows us to see the whole picture as history.

We need to be careful about where we place ourselves in a piece of 2000 year old history . . . because it's a little more difficult to see clearly as we live in our own historical moment.

Today there is a messenger of God right here with us!

A messenger of God who speaks the Truth and brings the Word of

God to flesh. We have seen the suffering of this messenger as many in the world . . . and many Catholics . . . rail against her as she proclaims what God has revealed . . . undisputable truths that will bring the Kingdom of God to be.

The Messenger is the Church! She was born on Pentecost and will continue to deliver her message until Christ returns. Like John, she calls us to an awareness of God and self.

She calls us to consider the poor and the marginalized . . . to be just to all people.

She call us to contrition, conversion and baptism. . . to life in the sacraments for our sake, not the sake of God.

She calls us to sanctity, saintliness, strong faith and good works.

And ultimately she calls us to a life in Christ here that leads to eternity with God after death.

For 2000 years God has given to this messenger many specifics and many generalities about what human beings are to do to bring all this about.

We may say, But (Bob) . . . the Church has made many mistakes . . . she is far from perfect!

Yes . . . that is correct. The people in the Church have, in history, made many terrible mistakes.

- through my fault.
- through my fault.
- through my most grievous fault . . . we have made great blunders in our handling of things.

The Inquisition

The Crusades

Hierarchical Nightmares

Slowness to acknowledge the Holocaust

Abuse scandals in the priesthood

. . . many mistakes over time.

But the Truth of God's message must never be mistaken for the brokenness of God's people.

And in this self-admitted brokenness the leader of the Church on earth has stood before the world and apologized profoundly for its mistakes.

One may ask . . . where is the apology for the Holocaust . . . or Pearl Harbor . . . or the atrocities of World War II?

One may ask . . . where is the apology for the persecution of infidels . . .
injustice toward women and children in the Mideast . . . or for
9/11?

One may look for the apology of governments and national leaders for
their errors . . . errors of communism, socialism, genocide,
tyranny and economic collapse.

But these apologies seem slow in coming.

The authorities behind these sad things count for little and fade away.

They send out no messengers of Truth. . .

. . . Because there is only one Authority of Truth . . . and that
is God.

And God sends His messenger the Church to give Truth to the
world.

A world full of broken people . . . all very much in need of guidance.

And God is giving that guidance . . . through the Church . . .

but many would rather kill the messenger than see the Truth and
try for change.

Even within the Church we make our complaints.

But we have to make sure that it is not God's Truth that we are fighting against. Maybe

- we struggle with the music, the preaching, the lectoring
- the priest/deacon don't make enough visits to the sick
- the sound system is terrible.

Hey . . . don't kill the messenger. Go to the source and talk it out. If you don't like it, say so . . . or come and sing or lector or visit the sick or raise money for a sound system.

But don't kill the messenger!

The message is still sound even if the ministers aren't perfect.

The message is still sound even if the people who make up the Church are subject to problems and temptations and mistakes.

Regardless of how well or badly we sing or lector or preach –

“I am the Lord your God, you shall not have other gods before me.”

No matter how good or bad the light, heat and sound systems –

“Do not steal, kill or commit adultery.”

No matter how vast or limited the outreach ministries –

“Whatever you do for these least ones, you do for me.”

Regardless of a saint or a scoundrel at the altar –

“This is my body, take and eat.”

We are the Church and God has revealed certain Truths to us.

The Church will never be perfect until we are perfect.

It will improve as we improve.

But the revealed Truth will always be the Truth ...

It is the messenger’s job to speak this Truth . . .

and we . . . are the messengers.