

Thirty First Sunday of Ordinary Time  
Cycle A, November 5, 2017  
Church of St. Joan of Arc, Marlton NJ  
[Malachi 1: 14-2:2b,8-10; Matthew 23:1-12]

## *Facing Hypocrisy*

Who thought it'd be a good idea to begin Prayer for Vocations Week today? In both the first reading from the prophet Malachi and in the Gospel, priests do not fare well. In fact, they get blasted.

Through the prophet, Malachi, God says to the priests: if you don't wise up and follow the way of the Lord, you'll be cursed. They have a responsibility to help people follow God and they have failed at it.

Jesus, as he does all throughout the Gospel of Matthew, rips the scribes and Pharisees, religious leaders, for being hypocrites, for not practicing what they preach, for making religion difficult and not helping people, for exalting themselves rather than serving others.

It's a tough critique, though well deserved ... and it makes me squirm! As one who has the title priest, one whom you

call "father," I feel the burn of it. Every week as I type up a homily, I feel the burn of it: can I – do I – practice what I preach?

But, even though you might not wear a Roman collar, you are a priest! Through the Sacrament of baptism, you are part of what is called the "Priesthood of All Believers." We are all priests here! We all have access to God! And, as disciples of Christ, we are all responsible for the work of the Church. We are all responsible for leading others to Christ. So, we are all called to live with integrity and practice what we preach ... no matter if we are clergy, parents, friends, teachers, coaches, neighbors and citizens.

Hypocrite comes from a Greek word (don't they all?). The ancient Greeks called actors "hypocrites." (Wouldn't Hollywood love to hear that?) It meant to pretend to be somebody you're not.

Greek actors had two faces: their own, and the one they let everyone see.

Jesus rips the Pharisees for being two-faced. They had their pious, holy face, the “I love God” face ... and they had the superior face, the “I’m better than you” face.

Church people get accused of this today ... and it’s a danger we have to constantly watch out for.

How many faces do I have?  
How many faces do you have?

***Is my Monday face the same as my Sunday face?***

Do I wear a different face in here than the one I show my family, my coworkers, my friends, the kids in school?

Which face is the real me?

Of course, we can be hypocrites in other areas of life, not just when it comes to faith:

If I gripe about hypocritical politicians and about the government, but then don’t vote, I’m a bit of a hypocrite.

If I complain that the kids spend too much time on their phones but then reach for my phone first thing in the

morning, maybe *I’m* a hypocrite.

Speaking of phones: what face do I put on Facebook or Instagram? Would anyone know I believe in Jesus Christ from my Facebook page or the emails I send? Do my selfies reveal the real me?

Regarding social media, one 16-year old girl said this: “Every day it’s like you have to wake up and put on a mask and try to be somebody else instead of being yourself.”\*

Thomas Merton once wrote: “Many [church] people are not saints because they never succeed in being themselves.”

Sometimes as I’m driving, it suddenly occurs to me that I am scowling ... for no apparent reason. What’s with that? Am I a scowler at heart? Why do I let driving do that to me? I preach love, mercy & joy and then I go around scowling. *Hypocrite.*

When we come face to face with God, which face will God see?

[taken from iGen by Jean M. Twenge, PhD.]