

Claiming Your Voice: Speaking Truth to Power. By Norvene Vest, Collegeville, MN: Liturgical Press, 2022. 232 pps

Similar to Pope Francis' recent focus on synodality in the Roman Catholic Church, *Claiming Your Voice: Speaking Truth to Power* by Dr. Norvene Vest, offers hope to and practical reflections for all people to raise awareness of marginalized voices and to build a fuller vision of the Kingdom of God.

Borrowing from her background as a Benedictine oblate, Dr. Vest begins her book with the question, "What does it mean to live as God would have us live in times like these?" She follows this question with an examination of four contemporary challenges in our political and cultural landscape: market culture; the global political empire; climate crisis; and resistance to racial diversity. With practical simplicity Dr. Vest follows each deforming pattern with helpful steps toward greater dialog rooted in the practice of prophetic imagination and community. Referencing the Biblical scholar, Walter Brueggemann, Dr. Vest describes the prophetic imagination as a task which involves (Interlude A): "joining God in providing energy for hope, cutting through social numbness, and penetrating the cultural self-deception of royal/imperial consciousness, in order that God and the sacred again become visible and energizing for the people." When speaking truth, the prophet must have both a clear perception of what is happening in the present culture, and an unwavering attentiveness to and for the Word of God. The prophet avoids the immediate crisis of the present and is always focused on a God-informed vision of culture that is enduring and resilient but may often be invisible.

The prophetic imagination, just as a synodal conversation, involves individuals, especially those at the margins, reflecting upon their journey with the Lord, listening to what the Holy Spirit is saying, and discerning the signs of the times. This path invites participation into a lived spirituality which has the greatest meaningful impact on people striving to live in right relationship with God.

For Christians, this means seeking answers to how Christ's own character is unfolding in our lives today. Thus, in a fragmented and disconnected culture, a greater commitment is essential to community, rooted in the belief that we belong to each other, and exist in a world that is united, yet diverse. The complexity of political and social issues must be met on their own terms, but always with the hope that challenges can be transformed into a harmony through their consecration to God.

Claiming Your Voice ends with thirteen practical practices of conscious community. These steps provide a summary of Dr. Vest's ideas, and helpful first steps towards beginning a culture of prophetic imagination, community, and synodality in one's community and religious context.

Faced with the initial question of what we can do in times like these, Dr. Vest joins her voice to other religious and theological writers offering a challenging yet hopeful response. Paraphrasing the blessing which comes from both the Benedictine and Franciscan traditions, she prays that: God may bless you with discomfort at easy answers...anger at injustice, oppression and exploitation of people...tears to shed for those who suffer pain, rejection, starvation, and way...and enough foolishness to believe that you can make a difference in this world, so that you can do what others claim cannot be done (Interlude B).

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