

Today's Gospel calls to mind another wonderful story from the OT, about Elijah and the widow in Zarephath. In both stories we have prophets, raisings from the dead, a never-ending supply of food, onlookers being both amazed and terrified. It's the Easter story over and over – amazing and terrifying for the people of that day.

We, of course, can still be amazed, but we're not terrified any more. These are stories of long ago, stories about an ancient people, stories from a time when miracles seem to have been taken more in stride than they are today – we might be tempted to think these stories don't have much to do with us. We certainly aren't able to raise the dead or provide through God's intervention a never-ending supply of grain and oil. So, we can be amazed and praise God, but we don't necessarily have to be motivated. Or do we?

We're kidding ourselves if we say that these are just inspirational stories. Jesus constantly reminded his followers that they were called to live as he lived. Actually, their Torah called them to live that way.

Jesus was only reminding them to be faithful to God's rule of life. It's the same for us. Our Baptismal covenant is a promise to live as Jesus did, to be a people of God.

So, we look seriously at these stories to see what they have to say to us. There are several similarities between 1 Kings and the Luke passage. Both Elijah and Jesus are prophets. Both accounts center on bringing a child back from death. The widow is provided with a never-ending supply of grain and oil, and we know that Jesus will supply God's people with a never-ending source of life in his own body and blood. Both stories show us that the ability to give life in various forms is proof that the person is a Godly person – sent by God. In both accounts there is an important connection between what Elijah and Jesus say and what happens. In Luke especially there is always a connection between saying and doing. It's often the connections that give us the "a-ha" moments that excite us.

Consider what the people say when Jesus gives the young man back to his mother: "God has looked favorably on his people." We hear those same words in Mary's Song and the Song of Simeon, early in Luke's Gospel. Elijah tells the widow that the Lord God of Israel will not let her jar of meal go empty or jug of oil fail. God looks with favor. It's all through the Scriptures. God looks with favor, God looks with love, God looks with unfailing care on God's people, especially in the readings today, on the widows.

Now, isn't it interesting that we keep saying God looks with favor and God cares and God loves? Certainly there's no doubt that God does all these things, but look at how often God doesn't do it alone. Look at how often God uses God's people to bring the message of this love and care to others. Here's that connection again – a connection between heaven and earth.

Both Jesus and Elijah are a connection between God and God's people. Neither of them works what we consider a miracle for their own glory. Their actions glorify God. All who witness these miracles give glory to God and acknowledge that God works through these two men. "Now I know that you are a man of God, and that the word of the Lord in your mouth is truth," the widow of Zarephath says. What a wonderful compliment.

The people who witnessed Jesus bring the young man to life said, "A great prophet has risen among us!" Another great compliment! Wouldn't it be wonderful if people could say that about us? Wouldn't it be wonderful if people would see us being a connection between God and them?

The thing is – they should. One of the many lessons we might learn from both these Scripture passages is that what Jesus and Elijah did, we must do also. We'll probably not literally raise people from the dead, but we are called to be conduits of God's grace, and we are called to be prophetic. Being prophetic doesn't mean that we have to be dramatic. We are prophetic when we are aware of the needs in the world around us and we speak the truth about it. The power of

prophesy is in the truth of the words and the challenge those words offer people to change for the better.

But we also know that prophets often get in trouble. The Old Testament is full of stories about prophets being reviled, ignored, harassed – and sometimes killed. John the Baptist lost his head. Jesus was crucified. Certainly we're not supposed to be prophets like that are we?

The thing is – we are. Each one of us is called to speak God's word of truth in a difficult world. Each one of us – not just the Martin Luther King Jrs or the Oscar Romeros, the prophets of our time – each one of us has our times to be prophetic. Different situations will affect us in different ways. Often, when we're most prophetic, we so love what we're doing that we don't see ourselves as prophets.

There's a man in Detroit Michigan who left the business world and joined the Capuchin Franciscan Brothers and became a friar. Ray Stadmeyer was in my chaplain class in 1995 as he was studying for the priesthood. I knew him as Brother Ray. He was assigned after his ordination to the Michigan Franciscan Priory and works in the toughest part of inner city Detroit. Brother Ray began a program called ROPE (Reaching Our Potential Everyday), designed to help people coming out of addiction and/or prison through group support and learning the trade of baking.

ROPE opened its first business outreach, "On the Rise Bakery", which is staffed by seven men who have been incarcerated or who have completed an addiction program. The goal of "On the Rise Bakery" is to have the participants learn a marketable skill while continuing to become men of greater integrity. Volunteers are the heart of "On the Rise Bakery." Many volunteers (mostly from the suburbs) join the individuals and friars, baking, packaging, and readying the goods for the Sunday parish sales.

Ed Collins, Crew Leader and former prisoner, explains "We didn't have a lot of caring in our lives. We needed to process and understand healthy relationships. There is a lot of warmth and caring with the volunteers. We have a real connection with these people. It rubs off being with the volunteers. We are seeing strong family values for the first time in our lives."

Brother Ray explains that the bakery is not about the process of baking but learning healthy relationships. "These guys have had tough lives. They have faced hard, hard struggles that are difficult for the average person to imagine. For most of these guys, this baking program is their first real opportunity to succeed."

That sounds pretty extraordinary, but Ray isn't all that different from you and me. Our vocations are unique. The ways we're called to be prophetic are unique.

Today, right here at Trinity we are recognizing someone who heard God's call and lived out her Christian vocation. Cathy McNabb describes herself as, "just another person who wants to help...build up a school that reflects Christ in our lives, and in the lives of each family that comes in through the front door."

Cathy stepped into a role as the leader of a school that needed to heal and grow. And, she knows that she couldn't, and didn't, do it alone. Together with other faithful people, school and church staff, families, the congregation, the school board and church council – together with many hearts and hands, Cathy built a "healthy academic and spiritual learning environment". She leaves behind a school filled with hope and a future.

That sounds pretty extraordinary, but Cathy isn't all that different from you and me. Our vocations are unique. The ways we're called to be prophetic are unique.

Like any prophet, we only need to take our connection to God seriously, through Baptismal promises. God will work wonders through each of us if we're open. God's word of truth can be in each of our mouths. What greater compliment could people say about us than we are people of God?