Jesus declares, “A prophet is not without honor except in his native place and among his own kin and in his own house.” … Why is that? … There are many speculative answers to that question. You might want to discuss it with family and friends as you drive home from church.

The word “prophet” comes from the Greek word, “pro-phai-ne-o.” It means, “to speak on behalf of God.” It has nothing to do with predicting the future. Many times, however, prophets warned the people that if they did not repent, that terrible things would result. The principle is, “sin brings its own ruin.” The people usually ignored the prophets, and what was warned, usually came true. We see this throughout the Old Testament, e.g., when the prophet Amos warned the Israelites in the north that if they did not take care of the widows, poor and needy that the kingdom would not last. Two generations later, the Northern Kingdom collapsed.

Who are our modern-day prophets: … maybe Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. here in the USA; Desmond Tutu in South Africa; Archbishop Oscar Romero in El Salvador? … Certainly Pope Paul VI was a modern-day prophet. In 1968, he published the encyclical, Humane Vitae. This document taught that every act of intercourse should be open to the possibility of new life, and at the same time, parents should practice responsible parenthood. The pope warned that if Catholics and others followed the contraceptive culture that tragic consequences would impact family life, our youth, and our culture. The pope received overwhelming criticism from bishops, priests, sisters and laity. He received so much criticism that he never wrote another encyclical. Today, however, everybody looks back, and says in great surprise, “O my God, the pope was right. Everything he warned us about has happened.” Many learned and religious people regard Pope Paul VI as the most prophetic person of the 20th century.

Not only are individuals prophetic but also the Church in its magisterial teachings is prophetic. E.g., abortion is a terrible evil, but it has become the law of the land, although political and moral leaders continue to gain restrictions. At the retreat house in Michigan, where I ministered for five years, we conducted two retreats each year for post-abortive women. They may have had their abortions 10-20-30 years previously but nothing cleared their conscience until they brought their regrets before God. Same sex marriage has just been approved by our country’s Supreme Court. SSM is contrary to God’s law, natural law, and all major civilizations. Yet people rejoice over it, including many Catholics who possess a wide range of adherence to the Church. I have a wonderful cousin who is gay: a terrific fellow, generous, thoughtful, helpful. I asked him to be the MC at my 25th anniversary of priesthood. He told me that believes in SSM. I replied that I loved him, but gay marriage is not God’s way. Transgender operations have gained great applause recently, but this procedure denies the reality of the human body with which God has created that person. Changing someone’s physical body is not going to
eliminate the profound psychological and emotional issues with which the individual must contend. The Church’s approach in the midst of these tragic expressions of confusion remains, “Hate the sin, but not the sinner.” We welcome and embrace sinners just as Jesus did. As St. Paul instructs us Christians, “speak the truth with love.”

What will happen to the Church in our increasingly anti-religious culture? ... The Church will do fine; for the next hundred years, we will be many fewer in number, but we will be more vital in belief and behavior, in truth and compassion. As we speak, a new post-Western Civilization is emerging. Catholics and evangelical Protestants will form its base. As Jesus said a half-dozen times, “Do not be afraid.” And take hope and courage from the quote of Cardinal George of Chicago, which he famously spoke in 2011, “I will die in my bed. My successor will die in jail. His successor will die a martyr in the public square. And his successor will pick up the shards of a ruined society and slowly help rebuild civilization, as the Church has done so often in human history.”

In the midst of collapsing Western Civilization and the consequent cultural confusion, may I suggest that we might follow this dictum, “sentire cum ecclesia.” This means, “to think and feel with the Church.” Have a heart for what the Church is teaching. Have a mind that seeks to understand better what the Church is teaching. Have a curiosity, and even a healthy doubt, to inquire why the Church teaches what she does.

In a sense, aren’t all of us to be prophetic, i.e., to speak on behalf of God?