

CHURCH: THE PROPHETIC PEOPLE



Jeremiah was a powerful prophet in Israel. The call of God came to Jeremiah like this: “Before I formed you in the womb I knew you, and before you were born I consecrated you; a prophet to the nations.”

Then Jeremiah replied: “Ah, Lord God! Truly I do not know how to speak, for I am only a boy.” Then the Lord said to Jeremiah: “Do not say I am only a boy; for you shall go to all to whom I send you, and you shall speak whatever I command you, Do not afraid of them; for I am with you to deliver you, says the Lord.” Then the Lord put forth his hand and

touched his mouth and said, “Now, I have put my words in your mouth. See, today I appoint you over nations and over kingdoms....” (Jer. 1:4-10)

God sent prophets to Israel from time to time to form the people of Israel as his own people, to make them know His will and to lead them according to His will. Leaders like Moses, Joshua and others performed particular functions in the history of Israel. God gave His people Israel many prophets like Isaiah, Jeremiah, Ezekiel, Amos, Hosea and others.

The Uniqueness of a Prophet

A prophet is the one who communicates God's message to the people. He speaks for God. He also bears witness to God's Word in his own life. As one chosen and appointed by God to make his will known to the people, his life may be far from happy. He may have to face rejection, Persecution or even death as he is called to raise his finger against all kinds of wrong doings and abuses. However, as one led by the Spirit of God, he stands firm and bears witness to the truth to the best of his ability. The prophets of the Old Testament have shown great courage to walk into the royal palaces and point out the injustice and misdeeds of the rulers.

The Prophetic Function of the Members of the Church

The disciples of Jesus, on the day of Pentecost, being filled by the Holy Spirit, prophesied and spoke in various tongues. The people who had gathered in Jerusalem from different parts of the world, were filled with wonder when they heard them. The early Christian community, when they received the Holy Spirit, turned out to be a prophetic people (Acts 2:14-19).

The members of the Church who receive the Holy Spirit through Baptism and Anointing become a prophetic people. The prophetic people are those who are anointed by the Holy Spirit and led by the Holy Spirit.

Jesus said: "But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you; and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, in all Judea and Samaria, and to the end of the earth." (Acts: 1:8). To become witnesses of Jesus Christ is the mission of those who receive the Spirit and become prophets in the Church.



The Salt of the Earth and Light of the World

Jesus said to his disciples, "You are the salt of the earth." He again said to them. "You are the light of the world." (Mt. 5:13-14). He also warned us not to let salt lose its saltiness and not to let the light go out. Salt preserves edible things; it also gives taste. **In fulfilling their prophetic function the members of the Church should work for the elimination of evil in the society and to add taste to life which they experience deep within them.**

Wherever they are, the members of the Church are called to bear witness to Christ through proclaiming the Word of God and by the example of their lives. As a prophetic people, Christians are called to shed the light of Christ on those who live in the darkness of immorality, deceitfulness and fraud.



The Leaven of the Kingdom of God

The Church is to be like leaven in the world and witness, like the prophets, to the Will of God and the values of His Kingdom. A little leaven can leaven the entire flour (Mt. 13:33). **Likewise, Christians are leaven put in the world by Jesus to leaven the entire society in which they live, by bearing witness to truth, love, and selfless service.**

Bear Witness to Truth

Jesus said that "I came in to the world, to testify to the truth" (Jn. 18:37). Jesus proved this through his words and actions. **Our prophetic function in the world is to bear witness to truth like Jesus.** The Church should really become the conscience of the world by fighting against untruth and injustice and by witnessing to truth, justice and love. This is the prophetic function of the Church. John the Baptist was beheaded because he raised his voice against untruth. St. Thomas More, who bore courageous witness to truth became a martyr.

The Prophetic Function of the Laity

Like the priests and the religious, the lay people have a prophetic function. Every one who becomes a member of the Church through baptism is called to be a prophet. Jesus, the greatest of all prophets, has entrusted the Church with the mission of continuing His prophetic mission in the world until His second coming. Every lay person is called to be a witness and a prophet of Jesus (Church-35).

The lay persons are called to fulfil their prophetic function in the Church by strengthening themselves through the reception of the sacraments, by leading a life of faith and by proclaiming the gospel through their words and lives. Family life has a central place in the prophetic function of the laity. The husband and wife are



to be witnesses of faith and love of Jesus between them, before their children and in the society in which they live. All Christians are bound to participate in the prophetic function of the Church. Empowered by the Holy Spirit, let us fulfil our prophetic function in today's world.

Word of God to Read and Meditate

Is. 6:1-13

Word of God to Remember

Let your light shine before others, so that they may see your good works and give glory to your Father in heaven
(Mt. 5:16).

Let us Pray

O God who gave prophets and leaders to the chosen people of God to guide and inspire them, help us to become your witnesses with the zeal of Elijah and the courage of Moses.

My Resolution

I shall not call a lie whatever be the provocations

To Think with the Church

The holy People of God share in Christ's prophetic office by a living witness to him, especially by a life of faith and love and by offering to God a sacrifice of praise glorifying his name (Vat. II, The Church, No. 12)

To Know the Mother Church

Mar Abraham, the last Metropolitan to be appointed by the Persian Patriarch, died in 1597. With his death began the Latin jurisdiction over the Mar Thomma Christians. Rome appointed Francis Rose, a Jesuit Priest, as the first Latin Bishop for the Mar Thomma Christians. The Western Missionaries who considered the Church as the community of people who follow the Latin rite, misunderstood the age old traditions of the Mar Thomma Christians. With a mind to save this community, they tried to Latinize the sacred traditions of the Mar Thomma Nazranies. The age of Latin administration over the Mar Thomma Church was one which disrupted many traditions in the faith life of the Mar Thomma Christians.

Questions

1. Who is a prophet? What are his functions?
2. What do you understand when we speak of the prophetic function of the members of the Church?
3. A prophet is called to be the light of the world and salt to the earth: illustrate.
4. Write a short note on: A Christian is one who has to bear witness to truth.
5. How do the lay people fulfil their prophetic mission?