

Encouragement Encouragement

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Prophecy – a Word from The Lord

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Many of us wish we could know the future. Today we have so many people always telling us what will happen – if this or that happens and everyone has a different opinion about possible outcomes. At the present time ‘Covid’ has had that effect on us, as we struggle to deal with its consequences. But there are other ways that we desire to be in ‘the know’. We worry about illness – making life changing decisions or even reflect on the old adage ‘if only I had known then what I know now...if only I had realised’. Probably most of us can say this about something that has happened to us in the past, whether regretfully or positively.

At the start of the new year, any year, we wish each other a Happy New Year! This year those remarks have been a little guarded as we do not know all the consequences of a pandemic. But we also began to realise that the future is not in our hands, and that, for a Christian, the future belongs to God. Jesus says ‘Leave your worries of today for tomorrow has enough trouble of its own’ – in other words, live by what you have to deal with each day at a time. This is not always easy, as many happenings evolve and days can run into each other. However, it is a good way to live and the bottom line is that the Lord will give us the Grace to deal with whatever befalls, if we put our trust in Him.

The Old Testament and the New are full of Prophecy. We are told this will happen, or that, yet there is a difference between Prophecy and fortune-telling, which should be avoided and is fundamentally flawed and dangerous. Equally seeking to know our ‘personal future’ can be unwise. Fundamentally, Prophecy is from God Himself, and most usually is an attempt to point us in the direction of God, or act as a warning. The word ‘prophecy’ means to speak out the Word of the Lord – ‘chuck it out so to speak’ – to wake people up. There is great evidence of this in the Old Testament and Jesus Himself did this in terms of ‘the End Times’ and warnings for us all.

We also see this in the Book of Revelation of St. John, speaking of the future. But we must not dismiss Prophecy as something to merely be, from the Bible, Old or New. It is not only the great Isaiah, Elijah, Amos, Zechariah and others who tell us of the Lord.

Their gifts were truly astonishing. Jesus Himself quotes from them to reveal who He is – a fulfilment.

So what of today? Do we still have prophets? One of the great witnesses to Jesus was indeed St. John the Baptist. In Advent for two consecutive weeks we had a theme of John baptising. This month we continue with the Baptism of Jesus by John. This is very significant on many counts. John was seen by many as a prophetic figure. He was the one pointing to ‘THE WORD’. The one who comes before to witness to this. This prophecy was fulfilled in the person of Jesus.

“Look there is the Lamb of God that takes away the sin of the world. This is the one I spoke about.” (John 1 29-34)
We have reference to these events again in the new year.

It is important to realise that St. John’s reference to Jesus was at Jesus’ Baptism. When Jesus Himself was Baptised the Father and the Spirit revealed themselves.

Now, how is this linked to prophecy today?

When we are Baptised, we receive the Sacrament in the name of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit.

How often do we forget that Baptism, as well as purifying us, bestows Gifts of another nature. We become ‘Priests, Prophets and Kings’. **Yes! We become all three** – men, women and children receive this Gift of Prophecy.

It is vital at this time of such confusion to remember this: we are prophetic people who are meant to know and read the ‘signs of the times’. We are meant to look out for them and draw peoples’ attention to them.

Never has this been so important as today when the world is looking for answers and we are meant not to shy away from this mission, but to lead people to God.

We are pointers and we reveal God to others. We listen to His Word and pass it on. This is a great and important call bestowed by Baptism and Anointing.



‘You crown the year with goodness, And Your paths drip with abundance.’

Psalm 65: 11

But we must be open to that 'Word'! This is true not only of the Gospel, the 'Good tidings of great joy' but also the word given so often to individuals that has a significance for them, and sometimes for others. How often does someone say something that startles the other person because it reveals or confirms something to them.

We may not always be aware of what we have said but it impacts others. This is certainly true when what we have revealed cannot be known to us. Sometimes we even 'have to' pass that word on, leaving someone to accept or reject it.

Throughout the centuries many great Saints have been given this task, in various ways with differing methods. Sometimes they called us to Faith – other times emphasised an aspect of faith and often highlighted what has already been accepted through Tradition but needed renewing, or re-emphasising. These prophecies can come in word, from a dream or vision, but they are always communicating God to us in a special form. Of course great care must be taken here to truly authenticate, as far as possible, such revelation, but never to lightly dismiss it. The Lord is alive and communicates with His beloved.

Children are not exempt from this and we only have to realise this in the life of recently mentioned Blessed Carlo Acutis (died at 15) and his mission about the Eucharist.

There are also the Saintly Fatima children, Francisco and Jacinta, St. Bernadette and so many contemporary child martyrs who declared their faith and spoke out.

But let us not forget the everyday action of the Holy Spirit and ways in which this action is visible, sometimes in the unexpected.

A true story in the last few years points to this. A young mother, having been deserted by her husband and struggling with the everyday has almost abandoned any belief in God, Church, let alone prayer or worship. Feeling at her wit's end and worried about the future of her three-year old daughter and feeling incapable of looking after her, cries out 'I seriously do not believe in You anymore, where are You when I need You?'

She sat down and cried as she felt her whole world had fallen apart. Suddenly she was aware that her little girl was standing next to her – she didn't even know how long she'd been there. The child put her arms around her mother saying 'Mummy, don't you know how much Jesus loves you...' and with the sincerity of her innocence added 'so much'. Now, she had never spoken to her child about God. She was astonished and was almost fearful about asking her little girl anymore. A little later she asked 'Who told you to say that?' The child answered 'He did, 'and smiling added 'He did'.

The mother could barely believe her ears but the next day a man called round and offered to take her to church. She did not know him and was reluctant, but she went. The first thing that greeted her, from the mouth of another person she did not know 'Jesus loves you very much, so pleased to see you'. The mother turned her life upwards and not inwards. Prophecy at its best, but I end with a quote from St. Paul to the Thessalonians (5 vs. 16-24)...

'Never try to suppress the Spirit or treat the Gift of Prophecy with contempt – think before you do anything. Hold to what is good and avoid every form of evil'.

So as we start the New Year remember that you are a prophet, listen to the Lord and be aware of the signs of the times. Take note and pray. The Lord's Word is always active.

I wish all a better and fruitful year ahead: with much love,
Halina Holman

Pope Francis

Thus Jesus affirms: "no prophet is accepted in his own country", and he refers to the great prophets of the past, Elijah and Elisha, who had worked miracles in favour of the pagans in order to denounce the incredulity of their people. At this point those present are offended, rise up, indignant, and cast Jesus out and want to throw him down from the precipice. But he, with the strength of his peace, "passed through the midst of them and went away"....

His time has not yet come... God comes to meet the men and women of all times and places, in their real life situations. He also comes to meet us. It is always he who takes the first step: he comes to visit us with His Mercy, to lift us up from the dust of our sins; He comes to extend a hand to us in order to enable us to return from the abyss into which our pride made us fall, and he invites us to receive the comforting truth of the Gospel and to walk on the paths of good. He always comes to find us, to look for us.
Rome, January 2016

Feast Days in January

1st Mary, Theotokos, Mother of God

2nd St. Basil the Great

3rd Second Sunday of Christmas

6th The Epiphany of the Lord

10th (First Sunday) Baptism of the Lord

12th St. Aelred of Rievaulx, 13th St. Hilary of Poitiers

17th Second Sunday in Ordinary Time

20th Ss. Fabian & Sebastian

21st St. Agnes

22nd St. Vincent de Paul

24th Third Sunday in Ordinary Time

25th The Conversion of St. Paul

26th Ss. Timothy & Titus

27th St. Angela Merici

28th St. Thomas Aquinas

31st Fourth Sunday in Ordinary Time

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