

11. July 2021

“The Lot of the Prophets”

Amos 7:12-15

To Amos himself Amaziah said, 'Go away, seer, take yourself off to Judah, earn your living there, and there you can prophesy! But never again will you prophesy at Bethel, for this is a royal sanctuary, a national temple.' 'I am not a prophet,' Amos replied to Amaziah, 'nor do I belong to a prophetic brotherhood. I am merely a herdsman and dresser of sycamore-figs. But Yahweh took me as I followed the flock, and Yahweh said to me, "Go and prophesy to my people Israel.

The Lord chooses his prophets and he sends them wherever he wants. The prophet may try to evade or even refuse, but the Lord's choice remains.

With Amos, God's choice hits a cattle herder with no special reputation. Nor did he belong to the circle of the well-known prophets or was one of their disciples. We would say today that he was a layman. Amos does not fit into the expectations of the authorities of Bet-El. He does not proclaim what the respected want to hear.

This is how it usually is with the true prophets. They elude the claim of those who represent the political or even religious power and would like to have it confirmed. The prophets however are alone dependent on the will of God and thereby they are free.

“If the Son sets you free, you will indeed be free” (Jn 8:36), lets us know in times of the New Testament Jesus. And it is exactly like that. Only the authentic bond with the Lord makes us free to follow the truth and not to compromise with lies and deception, whoever spreads them. Also the prophet is free only when he is completely bound to God!

The lot of the prophets is not easy. Mostly they are in contradiction to the 'mainstream' and therefore go against the grain. For the prophets, however, it often does not stop at “being in the way”. Often enough their lives are threatened and some give their lives for the Lord and the mission to be fulfilled.

We must remember that the *“light shines in darkness” (Jn 1:5)*, which, according to the Scriptures, did not accept it (*cf. Jn1:11*). In the prophets, this light of God

falls on the shadows of men and calls them to conversion. Here lies the difficulty. As long as you confirm the people and tell them what they want to hear, you are a good prophet. That was probably the court prophets in harmony with the priesthood. But as soon as there is talk of repentance and God's judgment, a different situation occurs. One's own thoughts and actions are called into question. One does not realize that God offers help through the prophets in the rebuke and that one can always convert to him. Whoever listens to the true prophet will enter the ways of God or return to them, whoever does not listen to him has not recognized the "hour of grace".

It becomes clear that in the prophets the Son of God is already prefigured. Jesus also called people to repentance (*cf. Mk 1:14-15*) and was not afraid to hold up a mirror to the religious authorities (*cf. Mt 23:13-36*). We all know how it turned out. Like many prophets, he was killed.

What about prophets today? Do they still exist? They are probably mentioned in the New Testament (*cf. e.g. Eph 4:11*), but hardly have a face in the course of church history. As a rule, everything seems to be covered by the ecclesiastical hierarchy, although special vocations, directly chosen by God, always come to the aid of the Church. The interventions of God through the Mother of the Lord also bear prophetic character.

But all Christians share in the prophetic dimension of the Church, since they witness to the world the coming and the return of the Savior. There may also be times and circumstances in which the witness of the faithful is especially needed, as they express their fidelity to the handed-down truth of the Gospel. Should a crisis spread into the hierarchy of the Church, then this witness becomes a prophetic corrective. In this way, one is certainly in the tradition of the Old Testament prophets, even if this takes on a different form today.