

13. July 2024

Send your prophets

Isa 6:1-8

In the year of King Uzziah's death I saw the Lord seated on a high and lofty throne; his train filled the sanctuary. Above him stood seraphs, each one with six wings: two to cover its face, two to cover its feet and two for flying; and they were shouting these words to each other: Holy, holy, holy is Yahweh Sabaoth. His glory fills the whole earth. The door-posts shook at the sound of their shouting, and the Temple was full of smoke. Then I said: 'Woe is me! I am lost, for I am a man of unclean lips and I live among a people of unclean lips, and my eyes have seen the King, Yahweh Sabaoth. 'Then one of the seraphs flew to me, holding in its hand a live coal which it had taken from the altar with a pair of tongs. With this it touched my mouth and said: 'Look, this has touched your lips, your guilt has been removed and your sin forgiven.' I then heard the voice of the Lord saying: 'Whom shall I send? Who will go for us?' And I said, 'Here am I, send me.'

The prophet Isaiah was allowed to behold the glory of God and His indescribable holiness, which normally no mortal can experience, if he is not prepared for it. Only in eternity can we behold God as He is, face to face. Now, in our earthly life, we see as in a mirror, dimly, as the Apostle Paul tells us (1 Cor 13:12).

To behold God in eternity, we must first be completely purified. All the shadows and consequences of sin within us require the deep purification that the Holy Spirit works in us. It is not surprising, therefore, that Isaiah, in beholding God, immediately became aware of his own sinfulness and that of the people to whom he belonged.

We, on the other hand, can be prepared much more gently for the moment of the beatific vision, if we already in this life accept God's purifications and follow Him in His ways. Then our earthly life - in the fulfilment of the task entrusted to us - will serve day by day as preparation for the final encounter with God, to reach our perpetual home in perfect joy. For the moment, we see only through faith; but then we shall see face to face.

God delivers Isaiah from his fear, and an angel of the highest rank, one of the seraphim, touches his lips with a live coal which he had taken from upon the altar. The holy seraphim are called the "angels of adoration", who day and night stand before the throne of God, singing the "Holy, Holy, Holy", which we too, united with the angelic choirs, offer as the fruit of our lips at Holy Mass. We can also consider the holy seraphim as angels of the burning love of God. Thus, the touch of the ember on the prophet's lips signifies that divine love has purified him. In effect, the text tells us that, by this act of grace, his guilt was removed and his sin atoned for.

If we look at God's history of salvation for man, we can recognise that it was an act of His love that atoned for our sins. In fact, all of man's purification happens through love.

Then follows that poignant scene when God asks whom He may send in His name. The prophet Isaiah, already purified by God's act of love, is ready to fulfil His commission.

"Here am I, send me" says Isaiah. -What a generous word and what a dedication to God's will!

We see that the prophet is not simply an executor of orders; it is God Himself who enables him, and he humbly gives his 'yes' to God's call. We know well what can await a prophet who announces the truth of the Lord. Precisely for this reason it is necessary that he acts under a special mission from God, and that only in Him he finds all his security. Even in such a mission we recognise the love of God, who includes a person in His plans to such an extent and draws him so close to Himself.

Listening to the response of the prophet, who is ready to carry out God's commission, can make our hearts ache. Are we not also in need of prophets today, who call the misguided humanity back to the right path?

And is not the Church, which should assume the task of prophetic correction, becoming weaker and weaker and allowing the spirit of the world to penetrate more and more into her?

Where are those who have been prepared by God and who, out of love for Him, take up their mission and respond when He asks *"whom shall I send?"*

Lord, we need your envoys, those who come in your Name and at your behest, to give an authentic witness to the world, free from human respects, free from false concessions and compromises, free from all ideological blindness. Lord, not a few of our shepherds are asleep and some are even on the wrong paths.

Send us your servants, who teach us the straight path of the gospel, who proclaim the authentic doctrine of the Church and have the courage to point out and counteract the growing apostasy that is manifest even in your Church.