

24. July 2022

“You must go to all to whom I send you”

Jer 1:1,4-10

*The words of Jeremiah son of Hilkiah, one of the priests living at Anathoth in the territory of Benjamin. The word of Yahweh came to me, saying: 'Before I formed you in the womb I knew you; before you came to birth I consecrated you; I appointed you as prophet to the nations.' I then said, 'Ah, ah, ah, Lord Yahweh; you see, I do not know how to speak: I am only a child!' But Yahweh replied, 'Do not say, "I am only a child," for you must go to all to whom I send you and say whatever I command you. Do not be afraid of confronting them, for I am with you to rescue you, Yahweh declares. 'Then Yahweh stretched out his hand and touched my mouth, and Yahweh said to me: 'There! I have put my words into your mouth. Look, today I have set you over the nations and kingdoms, to uproot and to knock down, to destroy and to overthrow, to build and to plant.'*

The reading of Jeremiah's vocation invites us to reflect a little on God's relationship with those whom He raises up as His prophets.

Official prophethood' was of enormous importance in the times of the Old Covenant. They were people directly called by God to speak in His name. As today's reading says in relation to Jeremiah, the Lord chose prophets even before they came into this world: "*Before I formed you in the womb I knew you; before you came to birth I consecrated you*".

Jeremiah, then, had been appointed all along for this prophetic ministry. He did not take on this task because he had special abilities and then God called him; but from the beginning this was the way intended for him.

This is a very important point! A prophet may want to evade the call that has been addressed to him; perhaps he feels inadequate and unworthy, knowing himself to be a sinner, or perhaps he feels that all that awaits him is too much to bear. However, the call and the choice remain, as does the capacity God gives him to fulfil the task he has been given. This is precisely what today's reading makes very clear.

When Jeremiah hears the words with which the Lord tells him of his election, he replies: *"Ah, Lord Yahweh; you see, I do not know how to speak: I am only a child!"* But Yahweh replied, *'Do not say, "I am only a child," for you must go to all to whom I send you and say whatever I command you'*".

It is essential to understand that a vocation comes from God and that He Himself takes care to give all the necessary abilities to correspond to the call. Let us remember the words that the apostles hear from the mouth of Jesus: *"You did not choose me, no, I chose you and I commissioned you to go out and to bear fruit"* (Jn 15:16). And about St. Paul the Lord says: *"This man is my chosen instrument to bring my name before gentiles and kings and before the people of Israel"* (Acts 9:15).

The disciples and apostles of the Lord remained faithful to their mission until death, except Judas, the *"son of perdition"* (Jn 17:12). Also in the time of the Old Covenant, prophets such as Jeremiah and Elijah fulfilled the task that God had given them.

Whoever wants to fulfil his calling must have no human respect: *"Do not be afraid of confronting them, for I am with you to rescue you"*. This exhortation is addressed here to Jeremiah, but it applies in the same way to the Prophet Elijah, to the Apostles and to all those who follow the Lord.

Certainly we are not all called to a mission like that of Jeremiah, to whom God said, *„I have put my words into your mouth. Look, today I have set you over the nations and kingdoms, to uproot and to knock down, to destroy and to overthrow, to build and to plant"*. However, the basic lines of this statement of the Lord are important for all those who want to live their Christian vocation.

It is the Lord who calls and He Himself gives the ability to respond to the call. If we put our trust in the Lord, we need not be afraid of men. It is He Himself who puts the words in our mouth.