

28. June 2023

False prophets

Mt 7:15-20

'Beware of false prophets who come to you disguised as sheep but underneath are ravenous wolves. You will be able to tell them by their fruits. Can people pick grapes from thorns, or figs from thistles? In the same way, a sound tree produces good fruit but a rotten tree bad fruit. A sound tree cannot bear bad fruit, nor a rotten tree bear good fruit. Any tree that does not produce good fruit is cut down and thrown on the fire. I repeat, you will be able to tell them by their fruits.'

The danger of being deceived by false prophets is real, and Jesus warns us of this very clearly!

The false prophets of Israel did not proclaim the word of the Lord, but acted according to their own interests, often in the service of kings (cf. e.g. Ezek 13:1-16). Authentic prophetic service, on the other hand, requires great freedom and can never fall into dependence; it cannot have a wrong regard for someone, so that the prophet no longer conveys intact the message that God has entrusted him to proclaim.

The comparison with a ravening wolf, who appears disguised as a sheep, points both to the great danger of false prophets, and also to how disguised and concealed their true intentions can be. But once they have managed to get into the flock, they devour the sheep; that is, they destroy and persecute them, trying to lead them away from God and taking advantage of their innocence.

Apart from the many false prophets who have come and who will come, both outside and unfortunately also within the Church, we will have to be particularly vigilant when the Antichrist or one of his forerunners appears. In fact, there are many biblical grounds that there will be an Antichrist or even many antichrists. There is also good literature on this subject. One of the best known writings on this subject is the so-called "A Short Tale about the Antichrist" by Soloviev Vladimir. Another is "The Lord of the World", written by the Catholic priest Robert Benson.

For us it is important to clearly detect anti-Christian influences and to denounce them, so that the faithful can defend themselves with appropriate means. For an awakened Catholic, it should be relatively easy to identify anti-Christian influence in the world. Through the gift of discernment and in the light of the Holy Spirit, he or she should be able to distinguish the merely human and ungodly constructs from what is truly the work of the Lord. Consider, for example, gender ideology, which by human reasoning alone, and even more so from the perspective of faith, can be identified as absurd. However, it is not enough to recognise that this is a totally deviant error; it is also necessary to detect the

work of Satan behind this ideology. He has long been trying to abolish the difference between male and female, to confuse people in the identity with which God has created and willed them. Even if we are clear about the negative fruits of such ideologies, we cannot fail to see the extent to which it is creeping into society to poison it, and how it is undertaking the 'indoctrination' of the coming generation.

But discernment becomes more difficult when 'false prophecy' infiltrates the Church or seems to come out of the Church itself. In the Catechism of the Catholic Church, numeral 675, it says the following:

“Before Christ's second coming the Church must pass through a final trial that will shake the faith of many believers. The persecution that accompanies her pilgrimage on earth will unveil the “mystery of iniquity” in the form of a religious deception offering men an apparent solution to their problems at the price of apostasy from the truth. The supreme religious deception is that of the Antichrist, a pseudo-messianism by which man glorifies himself in place of God and of his Messiah come in the flesh.”

False prophets can have various faces. They propagate in the Church their false doctrines, which do not correspond to the dogmas of faith, which question or cast doubt on them. They can shake faith in the real presence of Christ in the Holy Eucharist; they can relativise sin, in the name of a false mercy. False prophets claim, for example, that practised homosexuality is part of human 'normality', and demand that it be accepted by the Church. They encourage liturgical abuses, so that reverence for sacred actions fades more and more. They support worldly and modernist ideas and want to reduce the desire for holiness mainly to works of charity.

However, love of God comes first, and from this, the works of love for one's neighbour flow. The true mission of the Church, which is to lead people to eternal life, can never take second place; nor can it be oriented primarily towards the horizontal dimension.

If these false prophets want to seduce us into renouncing the proclamation of the Gospel to all nations as absolute and binding truth revealed by God, then they are opposing the missionary mandate of Christ (cf. Mt 28:19-20).

If the “religious deception” of which the Catechism speaks wants to give us to understand that God can be found in other religions as much as in Christianity, then it is clearly revealing its anti-Christian face.

In all this, the spirit of Antichrist is at work, to weaken the Church and her mission. Indeed, we have to lament a great apostasy of the faith in many nations that had already been evangelised.

It is all the more important, therefore, that we walk the way of following the Lord as intensely and seriously as possible; that we remain faithful to the authentic doctrine of the

Church; that we fulfil the missionary task entrusted to us by God; and that we defend the faith against all the threats of the spirit of the age, both in the world and in the Church.

A great deal of anti-Christian poison has already been introduced into the Church. But, with God's help, she will be purified and the gates of hell will not prevail against her (cf. Mt 16:18). In faith we hold fast to this certainty! Once the Church has been purified, she will be able to stand up more strongly against the anti-Christian influences in the world and will be able to reject them.