September 14

The New Shofar

"The song of the prophet is, 'Thus saith the Lord.' Any other song will never do for God's man to be God's voice to his generation."

Prophets and Priests

But you are a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, God's own people, that you may declare the wonderful deeds of him who called you out of darkness into his marvellous light. —**1 Peter 2:9**

At our baptisms, we were anointed to be priests, prophets and kings, yet few of us take the time to prayerfully ponder what this might mean for our daily pilgrimage of faith. Sadly, prophets are all too often associated with messages of doom and gloom, predictions about the future, and possibly someone standing on a street corner warning that the apocalypse is imminent. These are all applicable, at least in some way, but they are only a piece of our prophetic mission.

The biblical prophet is someone through whom God forms his people in the hope of salvation, invigorating them with the expectation of a new and everlasting Covenant that would include all men and women. What was new about this covenant was that it would be written in their hearts and not on tablets of stone. The prophets proclaim a radical redemption of the People of God, purification from all their infidelities, a salvation which will include all the nations.

To be a prophet is to proclaim the truth about God and about humanity. It is first and foremost a message of love and mercy and joy, and while it includes some element of "doom and gloom" and the reality that sin has real and potentially eternal consequences it is much more positive about the realities of our human existence. Like the prophets of the Old Testament, we are called to proclaim God's salvation through our words and our actions; to call people to repentance with both boldness and humility, "speaking the truth in love" (**Ephesians 4:15**).

Priestly people

Just as we distinguish between different aspects of the prophetic mission, we distinguish between two types of priesthood but always remembering that for both of these Christ is the source of all priesthood {St. Thomas Aquinas}. The universal (or common) priesthood of all the baptized and the ministerial priesthood of Holy Orders participate in this one, unique priesthood of Christ. But they do so in categorically different ways:

The common priesthood of the faithful is exercised by the unfolding of baptismal grace—a life of faith, hope, and charity, a life according to the Spirit.

Priests offer sacrifice. That is the nature of the priesthood in both the Old and New Covenant (and in any other religion with a priesthood). The priests of the Old Testament offer sacrifices of grain, wine, animals, incense, etc. to God. Christ our High Priest offers the once for all, perfect sacrifice of Himself

(Hebrews 4:14, 10:11-14). And the ministerial priesthood of the New Covenant—our priests—act in the person of Christ to re-present his one sacrifice in the Holy Eucharist.

The sacrifice that we offer is the sacrifice of our own lives: our joys, our sufferings, our work, our prayers, our whole selves. We offer this sacrifice to God in a variety of ways every day, but we offer ourselves to him most fully and most perfectly when we unite our own self-offering to Christ's perfect offering at The Eucharist. This intentional union of ourselves to Christ's sacrifice is the heart of what it means for us to participate in in our Sunday Eucharistic services.

These roles are not optional, and they are not just for some of the baptized. Every single one of us is anointed and called to proclaim the prophetic truth about God's love, and to offer ourselves as "a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable to God" (Romans 12:1). This is the mission of our baptism.

Am I prophet? But how?

As the holy people of God we share in the prophetic function of Christ, spreading his living testimony, especially with the life of faith and charity and by Offering God the sacrifice of praise.

A Prophet is someone who speaks for the one who calls them, in this case, God. And, as Christians, what is the best message we can give? Most obviously that would be the Gospel. But this does not mean we have to go out into the streets and squares with a Bible in hand and read it to every person who goes through, as if we were giving the news. It means rather that we have to bring the gospel to all areas of our lives, both in word and in action. The problem then is how we going to talk about something we do not know in depth. From there the importance of knowing the Sacred Scriptures, to know their teachings, to transmit them to others and to be able to live them in our daily life.

It's very likely that, if we seek to act as prophets, the world will treat us as such. And how did they treat the prophets in ancient times? They often repudiated them, did not listen to them, envied and pointed at them and sometimes even blamed them for evil. But we should not be discouraged, if any of this begins to happen, we can be more certain that we are acting as a prophet.

But beware of false prophets

The best way to work out whether someone is speaking as a prophet in Christ's Church is to look at their lives. If they are builders of love, connectors between people, illuminators of the life and ministry of Jesus for those who are searching; if their lives bring Christ alive, generate reconciliation, repentance, charity and inclusion, then the most likely reality is that they are empowered by the baptismal charism of prophet. They should be like magnifying glasses, focussing and intensifying the love and mercy of the Son of Man in the hearts and lives of those they encounter. A question: are you the prophet God has called for this time?