

#1 All Prophecy Starts with God

All prophecy starts with God. Prophecy reveals God's love. Prophecy builds up the Body, it strengthens the Church. It brings encouragement and comfort to the people of God. All prophecy originates in and emanates from the heart of the Father. In his second epistle, St. Peter says, "no prophecy ever came by the impulse of man, but men moved by the Holy Spirit spoke from God." (1:21) This is the beginning of our understanding of the role of prophecy in the life of the Church today. It begins with God.

St. John in the Book of the Revelation declares that "the testimony of Jesus is the spirit of prophecy." (19:10) This revelation about the nature of prophecy comes in the chapter describing "the marriage of the Lamb...and His Bride," the Church. It is a call to worship. All true prophecy is inspired by God and brings glory to Jesus. Prophecy comes forth from the heart of a worshiper whose heart is knit to God, bringing word of God's love for His people in Jesus Christ. The sixth century bishop Primasius said, "Indeed, the whole point of prophecy and of the sanctifying work of the Spirit lies in the testimony of Jesus Christ, whom the entire law and all prophecy serve." It's all about Jesus. It's all about worship.

Prophecy, therefore, is an important component in the life of the Church. Prophetic words given in the context of worship give testimony to Jesus and declare the love of God for His people. St. Paul says that words of prophecy are given to the people "for their strengthening, encouragement and comfort." (1 Cor. 14:3) These prophetic words build up the Body of Jesus and testify to God's love in sending His Only Son. Proverbs 29:18 says that "Where there is no prophecy the people perish." This is why St. Paul warns the faithful, "do not despise prophesying." (1 Thess. 5:20) When the Church embraces the spirit of Prophecy it builds up the faith of the believers and gives testimony to Jesus.

So, what do we do with this truth? We begin with the basics. This parish and the whole of the Charismatic Episcopal Church was birthed in prophecy. Our bishops move in the prophetic. We are a prophetic church. It is important for us to embrace this ministry of God in order to fulfill the calling that God has placed on our parish to bring the testimony of Jesus to this city. The prophet Amos said, "Surely the Lord God does nothing, without revealing his secret to his servants the prophets. The lion has roared; who will not fear? The Lord God has spoken; who can but prophesy?" (Amos 3:7-8) And King Jehoshaphat exhorted the people of Israel with these words: "Believe in the Lord your God, and you will be established; believe his prophets and you will succeed." (2 Chron. 20:20)

All prophecy starts with God, so we must begin with the revelation God has given us in His Holy Word. As we study the ministry of the prophetic and grow in the use of this gift in our common life we must "test the spirits." As St. John warns us in his first epistle, "Beloved, do not believe every spirit, but test the spirits to see whether they are of God; for many false prophets have gone out into the world." (4:1) God will not contradict Himself. Every true word of prophecy will pass a basic test of these three questions: 1) Is the word Biblical? 2) Does it build up the Body of Christ? 3) Is it confirmed by the elders of the Church? So let's walk this adventure together and learn as we do. God loves us and continues to speak to His Church today. He has tremendous plans for this parish. "The Lord God has spoken; who can but prophesy?"