

#4 Who Can Prophecy?

“Holy Baptism is full initiation by water and the Holy Spirit into Christ’s Body the Church.” (BCP p. 298) Those who are baptized are members and are entrusted with the ministry of the Church. In the exhortation given to the newly baptized we say, “We receive you into the household of God. Confess the faith of Christ crucified, proclaim his resurrection, and share with us in his eternal priesthood.” (BCP p. 308) We are all called to “share” in the Church’s ministry. Prophecy is the ministry of the Church, and we are all called, by virtue of our baptism, into Christ’s Body the Church. We are all called to prophetic ministry.

After exhorting the faithful in Corinth to “earnestly desire the spiritual gifts, especially that you may prophesy,” (1 Cor. 14:3) St. Paul tells them that they are all called to this ministry. Later in that same chapter (vv. 26, 31-32) he says:

“When you come together, each one has a hymn, a lesson, a revelation, a tongue, or an interpretation. Let all things be done for edification...For you can all prophesy one by one, so that all may learn and all be encouraged; and the spirits of prophets are subject to prophets.”

Note that “each one” has something to bring to the worship experience and that “you can **all** (emphasis added) prophesy.” And “the spirit of prophets are subject to prophets.” You can sit on the Word that God has given you, or you can speak up and edify the Church.

On the Day of Pentecost, after the Spirit had descended upon the Apostles and all were proclaiming the Good News in various tongues, St. Peter prophetically declared that Jesus, “having received from the Father the promise of the Holy Spirit, he has poured out this which you see and hear.” (Acts 2:33) And Peter gave witness to this declaration by quoting Joel chapter 2.

“And in the last days it shall be, God declares, that I will pour out my Spirit upon all flesh, and your sons and your daughters shall prophesy, and your young men shall see visions, and your old men shall dream dreams; yea, and on my menservants and my maidservants in those days I will pour out my Spirit; and they shall prophesy.” (vv. 28-29 cf. Acts 2:17-18)

The promise is that “your sons and your daughters shall prophesy!” These are the last days, and that is a promise of Holy Scripture.

But there are many in the Church who have believed the devil’s lie that they cannot minister, that they have no gifts, and that God cannot or will not use them. The arguments range from “I’m not trained,” to “I’m a sinner.” But God uses imperfect people. Just look at His chosen twelve. He does not call the equipped, He equips the called. You are called; therefore, God can and does desire to use you for the ministry of the Church and He will equip you with every spiritual gift you need to do the work of the Kingdom. In 1 Cor. 1:26-31, St. Paul tells us

“For consider your call, brethren; not many of you were wise according to worldly standards, not many were powerful, not many were of noble birth; but God chose what is foolish in the world to shame the wise, God chose what is weak in the world to shame the strong, God chose what is low and despised in the world, even things that are not, to bring to nothing things that are, so that no human being might boast in the presence of God. He is the source of your life in Christ Jesus, whom God made our wisdom, our righteousness and sanctification and redemption; therefore, as it is written, ‘Let him who boasts, boast of the Lord.’”

It is not a matter of what you know, or what you have been trained to do. It is a matter of believing that God has called you and will use you for His Kingdom. Then open your mouth and let God fill it with His Word.

But you may say, “How will I know that God will do this?” The prophet Jeremiah gave this prophetic promise from God: “Call to me and I will answer you, and will tell you great and hidden things which you have not known.” (33:3) He didn’t say “I might answer you.” He said, “I **will** answer you.”

Who can prophesy? “You can all prophesy.” (1 Cor. 14:31) It is the promise of the Lord.