

the CATHOLIC NAVIGATOR

Aboard St. Peter's Barque with the Catechism Charting Our Course

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Chasing Holiness

The formal Age of the Prophets saw its fulfillment in Jesus. As he stood between Isaiah and Moses at the Transfiguration, we witness in him the perfection of both prophecy and the Law. Yet, we still hear of 'prophets' throughout the New Testament gospels and letters [John the Baptist, Anna, Barnabas, Simeon, the four daughters of Philip (Acts 21:8)].



Today, we see in Ezekiel that the 'prophetic office,' defined as 'spokesperson of God,' is something to which we are all called. This makes 'the Age of the Prophets' not completely ended. In so far as *we* are called to care for our brother and sister, we too are called to be spokesmen and women for God. We are responsible for sharing the gospel and, ever-so-gently, calling each other to task when we perceive ourselves or others getting off the path. In this last age that Christ has inaugurated by his Passion and Resurrection, we are charged with this most serious and challenging responsibility. We are all prophets.

Dear Fr. Thom,

**Who are the "false prophets" the Bible speaks of?
Signed, Leery of Prophets**

Dear Leery,

You have every right to be concerned about false prophets. They are as much a part of today's world as they were in Old Testament times, during Jesus' lifetime, and throughout the Church's history. There is always some 'prophet' who comes along, delivering a 'special message' to a 'select group.' Generally, the message claims a special authority and esteem for the prophet, and holds out future benefits for the special group. This is an age-old formula: everyone wants to be part of 'the chosen' so why not give power to the one who invites them.

Both the Old and New Testaments warn us about false prophets. Ezekiel 13 delivers God's condemnation of the false prophets misleading the Israelites during the turmoil before the Babylonian exile. Jesus condemned false prophets (Mt. 7:15-23) and cautioned us that we would know them by their fruits (deeds): do they glorify God or the 'prophet'?

False prophets have led, and continue to lead, many astray. Look at what the New Age Movement has spawned since it has arrived on the scene! You are wise to be leery!

~Fr. Thom



SAINTS PRESERVE US!

Peter Claver was born in 1581 in Verdu which is in present day Spain's Catalonia. He took his final vows as a Jesuit in 1604 and, very influenced by St. Alphonsus Rodriguez, decided to live his life as a missionary dedicated to the slaves in the colonies here in the Americas. He also committed himself to those who were taken from the rivers of Africa and sent to the major slave market of the West Indies, Cartagena.

He ministered to each new slave in the gentlest and most loving way, beginning with their arrival on the ships. He took refreshments to the hold of the ship, reportedly a hell on earth. He would wash, bandage, and keep warm those chilled. He sat with and nursed the sick and dying and then went on to instruct and baptize those who survived. He is credited with over 300,000 baptisms, but did not stop there. He found it to be a part of his mission to follow up with as many slaves as he could, visiting them on the plantations where they were sent and making sure that the connection with Christ was alive and growing.

He ended up dying of natural causes in Columbia in 1654. He called himself "the slave of slaves" and has become patron of slaves, African Americans, and any who cry out for freedom from persecution and oppression. Canonized in 1888 by Pope Leo XIII, his memorial is on September 9.

In The Year 311 A.D.

...we witness one of history's true ironies. The horrendous Diocletian Persecution, instigated in 302 A.D. at the urging of the Emperor's subordinate Galerius, ended. That same Galerius, now successor to Diocletian with Constantine and Licinius, convinced his co-emperors to issue an Edict of Toleration stopping the persecution of Christians. He argued that brutal suppression of Christianity wasn't bringing about its extinction. Instead, it fostered the continual growth of the Faith! Unstated, of course, was his ulterior motivation. He was gravely ill and equated his disease with an angered Christian God, for in the wording of the Edict was an appeal:

Christians were asked to express gratitude by praying to their God for the emperors' welfare, the state's, and their own. They were also asked to pray for the state's prosperity so that they could live quietly and *free from further persecution*. How's that for a carrot and a stick!

Galerius died very shortly thereafter. One year later Constantine defeated his rival, Maxentius. In 313 A.D. he issued the Edict of Milan, ordering the return of all confiscated Christian properties. Finally in 323, after defeating Licinius in battle, Constantine, as sole Roman Emperor, embraced Christianity. It soon became the Empire's official religion.



Catechetical

Both Matthew and Ezekiel speak today of the interrelatedness of God's children; we are all connected! This truth spotlights a sacred responsibility each member of the Body of Christ has toward one another. We are called to care for the salvation of everyone!

Ezekiel reports that the Lord specifically warns all to "dissuade the wicked from his way," or risk being held "responsible for his death." Wo! How does one approach another about their sin without being offensive, high and mighty, and all 'judgy'? A genuinely felt compassion and love instead of self-righteous finger-wagging will go far in making inroads. But, a 'holy discretion' must also be observed.

'Holy discretion' is a means of showing respect for the truth (included in the 8th commandment). It is the recognition that not everyone has the right to know every truth, "The good and safety of others, respect for privacy, and the common good are sufficient reasons for being silent about what ought not be known... No one is bound to reveal the truth to someone who does not have the right to know it." (CCC 2489) This means that one must protect the person being approached. Telling others about the sins or failings of that individual ruins that person's reputation. The Jewish Talmud strictly forbids *lashon hara*, or gossip, and often equates this with "the tarnishing of an individual's good name." To tarnish a reputation was viewed as a kind of murder. (see website)

Holy discretion calls us to approach individuals in respectful ways, not exposing them to humiliation, ridicule, or ruin from others. Whether or not we are the actual victims of another's offense we must not go to them as 'other,' but as our brother or sister. We are all one in Christ... and each other.

SCRIPTURAL SECRETS...

Two chapters ago in Matthew 16, Jesus commissioned Peter as the 'Royal Steward' of his New Kingdom, the Church. Today, Jesus gives every member of this Church a three-fold method for dealing with fellow members of the Body of Christ.

First, Jesus directs the one who is offended to go alone to the offender and point out his offense. Yet, how many of us don't put our pride aside to even let on that we've been hurt? How many of us just nurse a grudge? How many of us try to get even, or go to others first and slander the offender? This most basic of approaches to mend broken relationships is often avoided.

Second, if one is approached and refuses to hear, we are advised to gather one or two others so that when we speak, there are witnesses to strengthen our case. Here, not only is a communal approach replacing an individual one, but a 'case' is being laid out. The individual approach might lead with the heart; the communal approach leads with the head. If the offender still won't acknowledge the offense when offered from a calm, reasoned perspective we are told that there is only one course of action remaining.

The last recourse is to take one's case to the Church (the local congregation), although this only happens rarely. From an individual level to a communal level, we now move to a more *juridical* (having to do with law) setting. Here, the Church community acts as a court to facilitate forgiveness and broker peace. If this is rejected, a more formal result will occur. The one who chooses to remain apart, or *out of communion* with his fellow members of the body of Christ, may be banned from the assembly and treated "like a gentile or tax collector."

The Body of Christ, both as individuals or in union as a corporate body, is forever being drawn to adore God and love each other. It is a testament to God's love for us that he has passed on a method for working toward unity, the same unity we will all experience in the Kingdom of Heaven.

Corner

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