

Biblical Prophets' Anti-Corruption Vocation

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Since the beginning of creation, God has not left humanity to itself. He maintained a cordial relationship with human beings. In spite of the unfortunate incident of humanity's disobedience recorded in Genesis, which marred this relationship, this did not destroy it. God evolved a master plan of salvation, which unfurled through the years and was made known to humankind through the prophets!

In the biblical narrative we notice that prophets became known primarily as the mediators of God's revelation to his people throughout the ages. Unfortunately the word 'prophet' has become such a generic term that embraces the many and various ways humankind has endeavoured to communicate with the supernatural. Even so, it is regrettable that some of these means are objectively outright weird, even queer and degenerative. In most cases, especially here in Zimbabwe, some people are inclined to think of a prophet as one who is orientated towards the future, predicting what is to happen in the future! In fact that is not the case. The message of the biblical prophet is essentially for the present. He speaks to the actual situation of his people, and this explains the tone of urgency throughout all the prophetic literature. Without doubt, some biblical prophets on occasion made predictions, but

basically because future events are formed by present reactions. God is always at work in the making of history. Man, by his reaction to God now, influences the course of future events. So, the permanent value of prophecy lies in the fact that revelation is at work in history while humankind contributes too.

In whatever world one may find oneself, the basic inequality in human existence, the unfairness of things, corruption, violence, injustice, suffering and all sorts of ailments torment people. At the present moment the world is gripped by the pandemic of coronavirus, which has claimed thousands of lives. Unfortunately, it may appear as if the world does not make sense, and man can feel lost in it. Prophecy then becomes an exegesis of this human existence; an effort at interpreting man and his world from the Divine perspective, that is, the existence of a God involved actively with his people. This is why the prophetic message often appears as one long tirade against sin and loose living. So the essence of the prophetic vocation is that the prophet sees the world from God's point of view. Accordingly, for example, when they hold forth about man's conduct, as in the case of corruption - they cannot see it as relative guilt. The prophet has to see it from God's point of view!

When we look at prophets today, as they should be looked at, they are supposed to be living examples of the impact of God on human life. In them we should see people who have experienced God. The core of prophecy lies not in the fact that a prophet is a moral leader, or a teacher - but in the fact that he presents to this age the tension between God and a man. God is the focal point of existence and of experience. So the prophet is the person in whose own life the contradictions of human experience are incarnated. The prophet is indeed God's voice ... one who stands in God's presence. He can confront God on behalf of his people, and often does [cf. Amos 7, 2]. He is also God's witness, not his own witness; his task is not to announce, but to bear witness or testimony; to be! A prophet does not need to prove anything. He makes God present, and when you meet God the decision becomes yours! A very good example of this is Elijah; who is the prototype of prophecy. He is often designated 'ish ha 'elohim - man of God. This is so, because he brings together God and man.

Biblical prophecy is also concerned with everyday holiness. A prophet must be a *persona religiosa* - a religious person - one who is considered a model of holiness, scholarship and closeness to God. Biblical prophets set the standards for the entire community



- so should modern day prophets! Certainly, the one thing that is critical about the prophetic vocation is that you can ignore the prophet's preaching or message, but you cannot ignore the prophet. The prophet's message and word, then is one of challenge and response. His main vocation is to declare, not to achieve. Like I have already said, he does not need to predict - as we seem to see happening in our contemporary society.

The mission of the prophet is to exhort. He announces God's disdain against injustice, corruption or any malice of any nature. In the case of biblical prophets, they were not, in fact, creators of a new theology or of a new religion. Instead, they were products of a religion already established. They were people who lived within a given tradition or culture, but who saw straight to the one

essential of that religion. In our contemporary society, corruption has become a huge concern. If the culture of corruption is breeding death in the community, the prophet's voice need to be heard - since the voice of the prophet is the voice of God!

Nevertheless, prophets must first be true disciples of their faith. In fact, it is their deep love for their tradition that allows them to criticize this malady called corruption. Faith and deep love for God is almost always the hallmark of a true prophet. And if they criticise corruption, their deepest motivation is not negative but profoundly positive. The dualistic mind presumes that if you criticize something, you don't love it, but the opposite should be said. There is a major difference between negative criticism and

positive critique. The first stems from the need for power; the second flows from love.

Institutions, especially some political ones, often prefer loyalists to prophets. Some people would be seen to be uncomfortable with those who point out their shortcomings or imperfections, but human consciousness does not emerge at any depth except through struggling with our shadow and contradictions. It is in the struggle with our shadow self, with failure, or with wounding that we are transformed and break into higher levels of consciousness. People who learn to expose, name, and still thrive inside of a world filled with contradictions are what we would call prophets. They are both faithful and critical.

Prophets are people who speak

National Development: Kick out Corruption

A Personal Concept of Development at St. Rupert Mayer Mission - Makonde

(Thoughts of a dry brain in a dry season waiting for the rains)

Fr Chrispen Matsilele SJ



Human beings are meaning making beings. Meaning making is sensible if our lives transfigure, transform and impact positively on the lives of others. St. Rupert Mayer's development embodies this ethos, in my view. It is meant to be an experimental example for promoting a self-sustaining mission in the twenty-first century through which other missions would easily model themselves.

National development can be considered as the ability of a nation-state to positively transfigure, transform and impact the social wellbeing of its people: comprehensive medical care, quality education, meaningful infrastructure (transportation and communication networks), clean safe water, food, reliable-sustainable-effective sources of energy and necessary freedoms among others.

St. Rupert is a Catholic mission in

the Diocese of Chinhoyi entrusted to the Jesuits. It is located on the rich soil hilly-countryside of Chief Chigaro in Makonde, about 80km from Chinhoyi town and 208km from Harare. It is one of the poorest missions run by the Society of Jesus in Zimbabwe serving the poor community of Makonde.

The Jesuits I worked with at the mission namely Trust Dekwende, Caswell Machivenyika and Frank Taruona embarked on the rough road to experiment with the idea of turning St. Rupert into a centre of excellence and meaningful development. The development plan was to speak to the following key areas: quality education (boarding school), medical care (through the hospital), food (through farming), reliable sources of energy (solar, bio-digesters and biogas production), and clean water (boreholes) among other

possibilities.

Boarding School and Creation of a market for Agricultural produce St Rupert Mayer Mission runs a primary and secondary school. Both are day schools. The two schools serve a community that exhibits a general negative attitude towards education so the rate of children dropping out of school and getting married are very high. Running a meaningful value addition education in Makonde is a mammoth task because of the harshness of the place. So it has always been almost impossible to retain skilled manpower in the two schools and the hospital. This made the situation worrisome. The victims of this non-retention of skilled manpower are more-often-than-not, the pupils and the patients from the local community that the mission serves. Given that situation, running day schools was non-sustainable. The mission initiated a 600 capacity boarding