

The Prophets and the Messiah

Voices of hope, a call to conversion, and promises fulfilled in Jesus.

Lesson 3 • RICA for Teens

“Speak, Lord, for your servant is listening.” (1 Samuel 3:9)

Who are the prophets?

God's voice yesterday... and our mission today

PROPHETS IN THE BIBLE

People called to speak in God's name. Some of their messages were written down in biblical books.

They denounced injustice, announced hope, and called people to conversion.

PROPHETS IN OUR TIME

Through Baptism, all of us share in Christ's prophetic mission.

We bear witness through truth, charity, and justice.

Being a witness to Jesus is also a prophetic mission!

Dictionary: Catholic Encyclopedia, "Prophecy, Prophet, and Prophetess"; CCC 783–785

Where did the prophets come from?

God called men and women from many different walks of life

AMOS • shepherd and grower

God took him from his work and sent him to denounce injustice.

JEREMIAH • priestly family

He felt too young, but God promised to be with him.

EZEKIEL • exiled priest

He received visions and spoke to the people during the exile.

DEBORAH • prophetess and judge

She listened to God and helped guide Israel.

When did they speak and how were they called?

We find them in historical narratives and in prophetic books

1 IN THE
LAND

Judges: Deborah
and Samuel

2 WITH THE
KINGS

Elijah, Nathan,
Isaiah

3 BEFORE
THE EXILE

Jeremiah:
warning and
conversion

4 IN EXILE

Ezekiel: hope

5 UPON
RETURNIN
G

Haggai and
Zechariah

God communicated through his word, visions, dreams, and signs.

Prophetic books: major and minor

“Major” and “minor” refer to length, not importance

4 MAJOR BOOKS

ISAIAH • JEREMIAH
EZEKIEL • DANIEL

These are longer books. The Catholic Bible also includes Baruch and Lamentations with the Jeremian tradition.

12 MINOR BOOKS

Known as “The Twelve.”

Their writings are usually shorter, but their messages are just as important!

In the Bible: prophetic books ≠ all the prophets who ever lived.

Catholic Encyclopedia, entry “Prophecy” • traditional Christian classification

The major books and their main message

Four distinct voices, one shared call to return to God

ISAIAH

Holiness, justice, and the hope of a righteous king.

JEREMIAH

Conversion of heart and the promise of a new covenant.

EZEKIEL

A new heart, the Spirit, and renewed life.

DANIEL

Faithfulness under persecution; the Kingdom of God endures.

The minor prophets and their message • I

The first six of the Twelve

HOSEA

God loves faithfully.

JOEL

Return to God with all your heart.

AMOS

Defend justice.

OBADIAH

God judges pride.

JONAH

His mercy is for everyone.

MICAH

Practice justice and humility.

The minor prophets and their message • II

The other six of the Twelve

NAHUM

Oppression does not have the last word.

HABAKKUK

You can ask questions and still keep trusting.

ZEPHANIAH

Seek humility and hope.

HAGGAI

Rebuild and put God first.

ZECHARIAH

Hope; a humble and peaceful king.

MALACHI

Faithfulness; God will send a messenger.

Important: there are two different Zechariahs

They share a name, but they lived in different times

ZECHARIAH OF THE OLD TESTAMENT

A prophet from the time of the return from exile.

His book announces hope for Jerusalem and describes a humble king.

ZECHARIAH IN THE GOSPEL

A priest, husband of Elizabeth, and father of John the Baptist.

He is not the author of the book of Zechariah.

The story of John's father is in Luke 1, not in the book of Zechariah.

Zechariah: from silence to praise

A story to remember in four scenes

1 THE ANNOUNCEMENT

The angel Gabriel announces that Elizabeth will have a son: John.

2 THE DOUBT

Zechariah doubts and is unable to speak for a time.

3 THE NAME

When the child is born, he writes: "John is his name." He regains his voice.

4 THE PRAISE

Filled with the Holy Spirit, he blesses God and announces salvation.

His song is known as the Benedictus.

The Benedictus is prayed every morning

Zechariah's prayer remains alive in the Church

WHAT IS THE BENEDICTUS?

It is the canticle of praise and prophecy that Zechariah proclaimed after John's birth.

It celebrates that God remembers his covenant and visits his people.

WHEN DO WE PRAY IT?

Every morning at Morning Prayer (Lauds) in the Liturgy of the Hours.

The Church still proclaims it today.

A father who doubted ended up proclaiming God's faithfulness.

Who is the last of the prophets?

The transition between the Old and New Testaments

JOHN THE BAPTIST

Son of Zechariah and Elizabeth.

The Catechism presents him as the last and greatest of the prophets: he prepares the way for Jesus and points him out as the Lamb of God.

WHY DOES IT MATTER?

His message calls for conversion.

John announces that the Messiah is near: Israel's hope is reaching its fulfillment.

Zechariah announces the coming; John prepares the way; Jesus is the Messiah.

There were also prophets without their own book

God spoke through many people, not only writers

ELIJAH AND ELISHA

They defended faith in the true God and showed his care for people.

NATHAN, DEBORAH, AND HULDAH

Nathan corrected King David; Deborah was a prophetess and judge; Huldah communicated God's word.

Not having a book with your name does not mean your mission is less important.

The prophets prepare messianic hope

Christians reread these promises in the light of Jesus

PROMISES OF HOPE

- Isaiah: a king of peace and the suffering servant.
- Jeremiah: a new covenant.
- Micah: hope in Bethlehem.

THE ANNOUNCED MESSIAH

- Zechariah: a humble king.
- Malachi: a messenger who prepares the way.

Messiah means “anointed one.”

Prophecies speak first to their own time; in Christ they discover their fullness.

Jesus fulfills the Scriptures

His life, teachings, death, and resurrection fulfill God's promises

1 ANNOUNCES

Jesus reads Isaiah and declares that the Scripture is fulfilled.

2 LIVES

He teaches justice, mercy, and the love of God.

3 BRINGS TO FULFILLMENT

Through his Passover, he inaugurates the new covenant and conquers death.

Jesus did not come to abolish the Law and the prophets, but to fulfill them.

And us? Prophets in our time

We do not need to be famous to bear witness to Jesus

SPEAK THE TRUTH

Do not take part in lies or mockery.

Bear witness with respect.

DEFEND THE WEAK

Listen to those who are alone;
help those who suffer.

Live justice and compassion.

SOW HOPE

Speak about Jesus with love.

Act like someone who believes
God does not abandon us.

Question: what message from God does my community need to hear?

First we pray. Then we reflect.

A small response to God's call

PRAYER

Lord Jesus,
open my ears to your Word.
Give me courage to do what is right,
gentleness to serve others,
and hope to proclaim your love.
Amen.

REFLECTION

Which prophet surprised you the most, and why?

ANONYMOUS QUESTION

Write a question you would like to discuss in class.

Sources to keep learning

Support material for catechists and families

BIBLE • CATECHISM • THEOLOGICAL DICTIONARY

Bible: Am 7; Jer 1; Lk 1; Jn 1; Lk 24; Is; Ez; Zech; Mic.

Catechism of the Catholic Church: 64, 522–523, 577, 652, 783–785.

Catholic Encyclopedia: “Prophecy, Prophet, and Prophetess.”

USCCB: Introduction to Zechariah and “Liturgy of the Hours.”

Note: the prophetic mission received in Baptism is different from the extraordinary charism of prophecy.

Sources used in preparing this lesson