

THE PROPHETIC MINISTRY OF THE PRIEST

BY

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a) Prophet and Priest

At first glance, «prophet» and «priest» appear to be two distinct ministries. To begin with, the priest is a member of an institutional organization, whereas the prophet remains a non-institution man. A priest can be defined in a non-sophisticated way as a member of a religious group or organization. The priest's first duty involves him as a leader in a community of worship and prayer. Secondly, he is committed to instruction about God and divine ideals. And finally, the true priest, as also the prophet, is expected to apply God's will and interpret God's law for the people. A prophet, on the contrary, is a non-institution man whom God raises individually out of the ranks of the community to champion a personal interior response to God at a time when the community is endangered by external formalism, is given over to excessive rigidity, and is tending to find its solution in a glorious, or a miraculous, or an automatic form of a divine intervention. The emphasis here will be on the prophetic aspect and ministry of the priesthood. It is important to understand and remember that the profound dimension of both of these ministries are organically related to each other.

Who is a prophet and what does he do? The prophet speaks and acts. He is a man of words and actions. The prophet is a person interpreting the sayings of man and of God. The biblical indication of the prophet — Nabi — as an interpreter of man and God is based on Exodus 4:16, where God tells Moses that his brother Aaron will be his interpreter because of his speech impediment. God said, «So he (Aaron) shall be your spokesman to the people. And he himself shall be as a mouth for you, and you shall be to him as God». (Exodus 4:16). Another description of the prophet is Hozeh or «seer», that is, one who is endowed with the ability to «see» God's message. And, as such, the prophet is a servant of God, a messenger of God, a shepherd, a guide and leader of the people. Also, a prophet has the ability to foresee the future.

The prophets were very active and involved in the life of their people and society in general. The prophets taught the «holiness» of

God and righteousness; criticized the moral corruption of the time and preached to establish a noble and ethical life within society. They often talked about judgement and reward; the final restoration of the old pious Isralite shepherd life; and independent farming, free from outside influence. They sought justice, mercy and righteousness. For example, the prophet Amos said, «seek good, and not evil, that ye may live» (5:14) and «hate evil and love the good» (5:15). They struggled against rigid formalism and external ritualism and triumphed with their ethical monotheism. In practice they were caustic but they were also merciful, like God. They showed mercy to the repented and a great compassion, *philanthropia*, to the poor. The Nabi — the prophets hoped, preached and worked to create an ideal, moral society marked with holiness and righteousness. As instruments of God, the prophets interpreted the divine message and the will of God to the people of their time. The prophets not only criticized but even judged kings, rulers and called upon all the people to observe the law of God. They dessiminated the divine law. The prophets were very active and involved in non-religious «causes» as well. They worked with extraordinary zeal to cure the social ills of the time, participated in politics and even judged the private lives of the chosen people.

Now, if our working definition differentiates the priest as an institution man and the prophet as a non-institution man, nevertheless, a prophet, as we saw above, cannot be understood and in fact cannot exist outside of the institution. He is continually reacting to, with or against the institution or the «society». The emergence of prophets, moreover, depends essentially upon certain conditions within the institution. The clock strikes the hour for the prophet when an institution tends to excessive rigidity and to over-concern for externals. A serious consideration of the priest and the prophet, therefore, can never separate the two roles. The prophet must never set out to destroy the institution, nor must the institution seek to suffocate the prophetic spirit. This is our present concern to delineate the prophetic aspect of the priest within the institution of the Church.

The late Fr. Alexander Schemman of blessed memory, stated that: «If you take a manual of pastoral theology in the Orthodox Church you would find that there are three functions of a Bishop or a Priest: He is first of all a Priest — that means he participates in the priestly functions — offers the sacrifice, proclaiming the grace of God and bringing salvation to men. His second function is that of pastoral ministry — he is the one to dedicate himself entirely for the life eternal to his flock.

And third, he is the teacher. («The Priest and the Teacher», in the *Bulletin of Orthodox Christian Education*, 1959). I will not go into the sacramental theology of the priest's office but rather I would like to focus on the following important aspects of the Prophet Priest of today. That of the healing, teaching and guiding ministry of the pastor.

From the earliest times, healing and faith have been closely interrelated. Whenever an individual was sick, he or she sought out either the temple with its priesthood or the religious expert, who used many rites and ceremonies to facilitate health. One of the reasons for the ancient Hebrews' rejection of medicine was that healers or physicians were associated in some way with the pagan religions of Canaan and were thus contaminated. This ancient connection between religion, faith, and healing would be more than an interesting piece of historical data were it not for the recent recognition on the part of many physicians that faith is still a crucial factor in the healing process. When treating the whole person, one becomes more aware that the basic attitudes of the individual toward the doctor, the treatment, and the world in general will influence the course of the sickness. However, this basic faith is seldom treated directly in medical education, in professional discussion with the medical community and in the seminaries.

In order to understand the healing power of faith let us see the recent relevant statements by physicians on the topic. In 1930, Dr. Slander Dunbar began to study the relationship of emotional disturbances to physical illness. She made a special study on patients in several wards in the New York hospital where she taught. In her book *Emotions and Bodily Changes*, monumental evidence is offered of the interaction between the body and psyche which results in disabling illness. With enormous work she managed to change the spirit that resulted in the recognition of the importance of faith in the process of healing. Once it was understood that emotions could effect the body, it was not long before faith was seen as important in maintaining health. One of the most articulate statements of the connection of faith and healing is by the psychiatrist Jerome Frank in his provocative work, *Persuasion and Healing*. He states: «The question of how far a physician should go to meet a patient's expectations is a thorny one. Obviously he cannot use methods in which he himself does not believe. Moreover, reliance on the healing powers of faith, if it led to neglect of proper diagnostic or treatment procedures, would clearly be irresponsible. On the other hand faith may be a specific antidote for certain emotions such as fear or discouragement, which may constitute the essence of a patient's

illness. For such patients, the mobilization of expectant trust by whatever means may be as much an etiological remedy as penicillin for pneumonia.» One of the most dramatic uses of faith in the healing process has been developed by Dr. Carl Simonton in Fort Worth, Texas. His description of the use of the meditational practices in the treatment of cancer shows an amazing application of «faith» technique to a specific problem (Carl and Stephanie Simonton, *Getting Well Again*, Los Angeles: J. P. Tarcher, 1978. In this book you will find an excellent summary of the data available.) Another significant work on healing in which faith is evidently a constitutive element is found in a 1972 symposium transcript — *The Dimension of Healing*. (Academy of Parapsychology and Medicine, 314 Second Street, Los Altos, California 94022, 1973).

From the time of prehistoric shamanism and the historical religions all over the world — healing, medicine and faith have been closely related. Mircea Eliade has provided the definitive study of true shaman in his carefully researched study, *Shamanism: Archaic Technique of Ecstasy* (Princeton University Press, 1970). The Shaman's task was to find the secret to free the sick from evil spirits with positive powers and bring them to health. The basic point of shamanism is found all over the world. In his world view there are evil and destructive forces, forces of disharmony and division and there are spirits and forces of wholeness, restoration and healing. In many languages the words for salvation and healing are related. The religious task and the healing task are essentially the same: to release the individual from the destructive realities and bring him or her into relationship with the protecting, positive, healing realities. This is found in nearly all primitive religions around the world, even in the more sophisticated cultures of East and West. This is clearly articulated in the philosophy of Plato where the healing of the body without the healing of the soul is unthinkable. In the dialogue, *Charmides*, Plato states that, «this is the great error of our day in the treatment of the human body, that physicians separate the psyche from the body». See also *Healing and Christianity* by Morton I. Kelsey (New York: Harper and Row, 1973).

As one reads the New Testament documents he sees Jesus very often in the role of a healer. Jesus healed because He saw sickness as destructive in itself and caused on the whole by destructive, demonic forces, from which He came to rescue humankind. The same tradition was continued in the early history of Christianity, as recorded in the Book of Acts (Peter healed even with his shadow) and as records show of the first five centuries of Christian life.

With this pervasive history of connection between faith, religion, and healing, one wonders where the separation between them took place in Western culture. One reason is the development of rational materialism beginning with the disintegration of the Western society by the incursions of the barbarians and the collapse of the social structures in the Middle Ages. Aquinas, the great scholastic philosopher-theologian, developed a theological position of reality based on the Aristotelean materialistic view of the world. When the thinking of Copernicus, Kepler, and Galileo questioned the geocentric cosmology of the Western Church, the Pope withdrew into the fortified walls of dogmas. Thus, Western science and religion came to a tragic split. Science became almost entirely materialistic and rational. Modern science grew from that materialistic philosophy and rational determinism. The latest developments, however, of modern science show clearly that such a materialistic and deterministic point of view is no longer tenable. It is a paradox to see medical people today who are far more open to the relationship of faith and healing than the clergy, who are largely caught in the nineteenth-century religion/science split. It is very difficult for the physician to have a dialogue today with the clergy on the relationship between faith and healing. It is about time to return to a healing power of the prophetic ministry of the priest. Real pastoral care will involve the total person of the priest with the total person of the individual who is being visited, that is, mind, emotion, spirit and body - soul, all interact. The priest of today needs to raise the conscience of the religious community and the medical profession to provide the healing care to the sick to become well and to stay healthy. This healing ministry of the Orthodox Church has an unbroken continuity since the time of Jesus. Kelsey points this out in the following statement: «In the tradition of the Eastern Orthodox Christianity, which was little subject to the influence of (the rational philosophy) Aristotle, there had been little question about the gifts of healing and the power of God and the Church to heal bodies and minds, as well as souls». (*Prophetic Ministry*. New York: Crossroads, 1982, p. 54). It is evident in the Orthodox Church and in its prophetic-priestly ministry that healing is one of the ways the Spirit makes its direct impact on us. In the New Testament, the power to heal was considered a gift of the Holy Spirit. It is amazing to see that one-fifth of the Gospel narrative is concerned with healing. And Jesus sent his followers out to practice such a ministry, that is, they were to reach, to preach, and to heal. Jesus healed because He saw that sickness had a destructive effect on the human life, and He cared about human beings.

«God so loved the world that He gave His only Son;» Jesus so loved the world that He was compassionate for men and women; He wanted to relieve people from their pain and misery.

The apostolic Church continued the healing ministry just as Jesus had done. There are nineteen accounts of healing only in Acts that brought recovery of health by the apostles. The Fathers of the Church continued the same tradition of healing in the centuries that followed. The sacramental healing of Holy Unction was widely practiced in East and West. In the West it was changed in the Middle Ages to a sacrament for the dying — extreme unction. Whereas in the Orthodox Church no such change took place in the healing sacrament of Holy Unction. The priest is desperately needed today with his deep faith to be a healer, especially through the service of Holy Unction and the counseling ministry for the health of souls. Healing of both the soul and body requires conditions of a spiritual nature, which can best be seen and helped by one trained and practiced in our religious traditions. The priest is ordained to bring the sacramental healing to the people of God and to teach them the Word and the message of the Lord.

b) The Priest As Teacher

It is important in our day to recognize the need to define the role of the priest as the chief religious educator in the parish. The priest needs to be recognized and identified as the leading resident theologian, the organizer and administrator of religious education and the master teacher. The late Fr. Alexander Schemman was aptly articulate in this in his article, «The Priest and the Teacher» (*Bulletin of Orthodox Christian Education*, 1959). He says: «The Orthodox Church has a developed doctrine of teaching ministry and we must make it very clear that the teaching ministry is the ordained ministry,» and that «the teaching requires a gift of Grace (Ordination) because that teaching is not of a secular nature but one of Divine Revelation. Just as a man must be dedicated and receive the grace of the Priesthood in order to perform The Eucharist, so the one who teaches, must be ordained at the Altar because the truth of his teaching is the same Truth which is on the Alter — the revelation of God in Jesus Christ.» The need of the priest in relation to Christian Education constitutes the philosophy of mission of the parish to minister to the world, or the community at large. A recent Christian Educator, Rev. Clinton Buck, states the case as follows: «Recent writing in Christian education indicates the need for integrat-

ing the theory of Christian education into the total life and work of the congregation and making the pastor the chief educator. Three major concerns proposed by the writers are: 1) intentional religious socialization (enculturation) as an educational process aimed at handing on the tradition and creating a community of believers nurturing persons in the faith, 2) education which serves the total mission and ministry of the congregation through intergration of education into the total life and work of the congregation, and 3) epistemologies which combine knowing the Will of God and doing the truth in the world» (p. 4). This will enable the priest to form and educate his congregation for the ministry of the Church in the world. The priest must not do everything, including fund-raising, managing the affairs of the parish properties and social events, visiting the hospital and pastoral house visitations. These and other activities must be shared by the devoted, committed and dedicated loyal Christians.

The priest, by the very nature of his pastoral ministry, is the chief educator leading the people of God as the primary resident theologian, making the authentic Orthodox tradition accessible to the congregation, interpreting that tradition in light of current events and issues, and enabling the faithful to interpret life theologically. The Old Testament prophet is a very good paradigm of the leading resident theologian. The Old Testament proclaimed the mysteries of God and called the faithful to repentance and moral reform by his presence (that is, by being) and by his action (by doing), and by his words, «thus saith the Lord», enabling the people to escape the destruction of God's judgement and securing the blessings of God for the community of faith. Prophecy is theology in action, that is, theologizing. The prophet combined the totality of human existence with the wisdom and truth of pious living by leading to reinterpret the tradition in light of events of the day. The true prophet correctly identified the sins which were destroying the community and demanded that people turn to God with their whole hearts, minds and actions. The prophet overcame the dichotomies between faith and life, repentance and ethical behavior, personal piety and community responsibility, and repentance and reformation.

Prophet and people arrived at varieties of conclusions about what God expected at a particular time and place, but the prophet as theologian led the people to recognize that under God's redemptive judgement the faithful response of the people would bring about redemption of life, that is, salvation. Faith response for the prophet was found in integration of all aspects of life under God's redemptive judgement and

demands for faithfulness in intentional ethical action and imaginative disclosures of the mysteries of God's redemptive activity. The leading resident theologian in the parish enables the people to interpret the Orthodox tradition and define the meaning of faithful living in light of contemporary events. Redemptive living is achieved when each person of the community of faith is able to think theologically, to act theologically, and to find the meaning of existence theologically. The resident theologian interprets authentically the contents of the tradition in contemporary life so that the faithful are led to question the meaning of their activity and to understand what faithful living means for them in every activity of life. The prophetic leader in doing theology in the parish, leading participants to grow in faith and in knowledge of God, needs competencies to understand the means and methods of personal spiritual growth, to interpret life theologically, to conceptualize spiritual growth from «womb to tomb,» to integrate belief and action in the work of the Holy Spirit today, to be accountable for the ministry in and with the world, to plan and structure spiritual growth, and to assess the need for educational ministry in all avenues of life. The visible head of the parish needs to integrate education with worshipping, serving, witnessing and being the community of faith in the world.

As mentioned above, the statement of Fr. Schamman, the priest receives the mantle of master teacher-theologian by virtue of office, ordination, and through teaching expresses the authority of God and enables the power of God to be operative in the lives of persons. The master teacher possesses knowledge from theological education in the seminary and years of experiences in the ministry which constantly calls for authentic theologizing in the day-to-day living in the world. Teaching by the priest seeks to make the Orthodox tradition accessible and to guide the faithful to theologize faithfully in contemporary life. Teaching discloses the mystery of God in such a way that persons are brought to commitment to the will of God. Doing the will of God is the root meaning of faithfulness. The master theologian-teacher recognizes the importance of instruction for missions and through teaching enables persons to serve God in the world; to develop the ability to organize and administer the parish educational ministry and to be a prophetic leader and spiritual guide of the people of God in the world.

c) The Priest As Leader

The priest, by nature of his office and ordination, is the leader

par excellence in the Christian Orthodox community. No matter how many leaders a parish may have, the visible head of the community is the priest. He is the only person who can be the leading organizer and administrator. The priest shapes the nature of the entire parish by the role he plays in bringing unity to the total mission of the Christian community as a witness to Christ in the world. No one other than the priest can integrate the total life of the Christian congregation.

There are several theories and good books and articles on managerial leadership by Maslow, MacGregor, Drucker and others. These issues have been discussed during this Seminar by others who are experts in these topics. An application of these theories to the Christian understanding of leadership may be found in a small book with the title: *The Leadership Book* by Charles J. Keating (New York : Paulist Press, 1978). The author says that he wrote the book so that, the «...leaders of the Churches, especially leaders at the local level of diocese, parish or prayer group be instructed in the art of Christian leadership» (p. 1). What is leadership? Current researchers on the topic define leadership as «...a process of influencing the activities of an individual or group in an effort toward accomplishing goals in a given situation» (p. 16). The prophetic leadership of the priest is expressed in attaining the specific goal of leading people to God and His Kingdom. The prophets discerned the events of the time and acted in accordance to the demands of the situation to give solutions to problems and guide people to morality. Contemporary experts say that «leadership is situational, largely depending upon the needs of others and even influenced by the needs of the leader himself or herself. Leadership styles need to change from group to group and situation to situation. The leader's style changes when he or she personally changes» (p. 16). The effective, prophetic Christian leader is not a superman or expected to be greater than the Master, Christ Jesus, Who chose to redeem the world through human nature. The priest accepts things as they are, while keeping a burning desire to better everything «through Christ, with Christ and in Christ.» And like Christ, the priest will use all that is truly human to manifest the divine. A priest, like a prophet, it seems, does not light the fire; he turns up the heat.

One of the most vital elements for effective leadership is good communications, both written and verbal. Leaders must speak up as the prophets, apostles and saints did. An effective leader, however, must first learn to be a good follower. Aristotle very aptly stated, «Who would learn to lead, must as men say, first of all learn to obey.» This was also

indicated by an answer given by a group of West Point officers when they were asked: «Since developing leadership is what this place is all about... how do you go about doing that task?» The response was: «We begin by teaching them to be good followers.» (William Litzingel and Thomas Schefer. «Leadership Through Fellowship», *Business Horizons* (Sept.-Oct., 1982), p. 78). This proves the point that able leaders come from able followers. The priest like the prophet is obedient to the Word of God and seeks to bring the community to attain its goal, that is to find salvation in Christ. Can a priest become a prophet or a leader? What must he do? All that a priest can do, in order to become a prophet or a leader is to be *himself as a priest*. Himself, the priest, as he truly exists at the heart of his existence in God's presence, and in the deep, prayerful, even in the mystical sense of union with God, responding to all the need and the demand within the institution of the priesthood. The great leader-priest-saint, as it was in old Israel, was often rejected by the community of his own time, but he was accepted as a prophet or saint by the later community. Prophets and saints were stoned and crucified. They would never have been voted into office by a democratic referendum. It is necessary to emphasize again that the true prophet or priest is always loyal to the membership of the community. No one is a prophet unless he is loyal to the community of which he is part. No prophet, and certainly not Jesus, ever deserted Israel. Prophetism has always an element of future prediction. The link uniting past, present and future is the continuance not just of the prophetic words but of the person of the prophet himself in the community. Biblically, it is impossible to separate prophetic words from the prophet who speaks them. The prophet perseveres in his ideas and at times he hides, but his ideas raise a new generation within the confines of the community. The priest, like the prophet, responds to the institution or the Church, by stirring up hopes and ideals. He is releasing the Spirit. The priest as prophet dreams hopes and releases ideas and then waits to see how God, living at the heart of the community will fulfill these goals and aspirations. The priests as prophet, as leader within the community, thinks deeply, mystically, and rests in God's presence, the divine presence he discerns at the heart of the community, the Church as the body of Christ. The priest as prophet enables other people to think; he never does the thinking for them. His prayers enable others to join him in prayer; he never substitutes for their prayer. The priest as prophet does not dictate the details of life, but transforms these details by his hopes and dreams. The priest as prophet never seeks to destroy the institu-

tion or the external structure of the Church, but rather, to transform the Church by revivifying its interior vitality. This we all have as a living great example of our own, revered and beloved Archbishop Iakovos — as priest in the Boston cathedral and as Archbishop in the Americas. And it is fitting that this year we celebrate the Golden Jubilee of his service in the vineyard of the Church.

d) Saint Gregory The Theologian On The Priesthood

In thinking about the topic assigned to me for this lecture, I read several patristic texts, especially that of St. Gregory the Theologian, Patriarch of Constantinople. His famous *Oration* «a defense of his flight to Pontus» is a piece of literary work that eloquently articulates every aspect of the priesthood. This work influenced St. John Chrysostom and inspired him to write his own work on the priesthood. Also, this influenced St. Gregory the Great, who wrote his work on *Pastoral Care*. I strongly believe after I re-read this oration, it should be a required reading for every seminarian and spiritual reading for every priest, once a year. It should be published separately and widely circulated. Let me make some brief comments of this splendid work.

The following is worth quoting. St. Gregory says: «For my present position is due, my good people, not to inexperience and ignorance, nay indeed, that I may boast myself a little, neither is it due to contempt for the divine laws and ordinances. Now, just as in the body there is one member which rules and, so to say, presides, while another is ruled over and subject; so too in the churches. God has ordained, according either to a law of equality, which admits of an order of merit, or to one of providence, by which He has knit all together, that those for whom such treatment is beneficial, should be subject to pastoral care and rule, and be guided by word and deed in the path of duty; while others should be pastors and teachers, for the perfecting of the church, those, I mean, who surpass the majority in virtue and nearness to God, performing the functions of the soul in the body, and of the intellect in the soul; in order that both be so united and compacted together, that, although one is lacking and another is pre-eminent, they may, like the members of our bodies, be so combined and knit together by the harmony of the Spirit, as to form one perfect body, really worthy of Christ Himself, our Head.» (II *Oration* 3).

He emphasizes that «... it is right for us to guard against bad painters — as well as bad models for poor painters and perhaps poor

models for people. As the proverb says, that we undertake to heal others while ourselves are full of sores.» (II Oration 13). To be a leader and a guide of men is «the art of arts and science of sciences.» That is what he calls leadership and a priest must possess it.

St. Gregory compares the priesthood to the art of the medical doctor. The physician, he says, «prescribes medicines and diet and guards against things injurious, that the desires of the sick may not be a hindrance to his art.» Sometimes he even makes use of «the knife for the severer remedies.» But none of all these are as «laborious» as that of the physician of souls, the priest. (II *Oration* 18) Speaking of the priest as spiritual physician, St. Gregory says that «the scope of our art is to provide the soul with wings to rescue it from the world and give it to God, and to watch over that which is in His image, if it abides, to take it by the hand, if it is in danger, or restore it, if ruined, to make Christ to dwell in the heart by the Spirit: and, in short, deify, and bestow heavenly bliss upon, one who belongs to the heavenly host». (II *Oration* 22). As the treatment of the medical doctors takes different forms and applies the proper medicines as determined by the circumstance, in the same way the spiritual physician must use instruction and guidance as dictated by the need (II *Oration* 30) An excellent example is the great apostle, St. Paul. «He, (St. Paul) fights for all, prays for all, is zealous for all, is kindled on behalf of all, whether without law, or under the law; a preacher of the Gentiles, a patron of the Jews.» (II *Oration* 55).

St. Gregory brings the prophets of the Old Testament to bear witness to the preaching ministry of the priest. To teach justice and enlighten the people. To remind them of the covenant of God, a covenant of life and peace and to seek the vision of the prophets. The following statement is a summary of this — the purity of the priest and the mission of his ministry. He says: «A man must himself be cleansed, before cleansing others: himself become wise, that he may make others wise; become light, and then give light; draw near to God, and so bring others near; be hallowed, then hallow them; be possessed of hands to lead others by the hand, of wisdom to give advice.» (II *Oration* 71). He declares that «One branch of philosophy is, however, too high for me, the commission to guide and govern souls...» (II *Oration* 78).

There are times, St. Gregory points out, that we desire to flee, to get away from the face of God as Jonas the prophet did. Jonas hoped to hide himself in the sea but he could not escape. He did not escape from God because he was commissioned to preach the message of salvation to the Ninevites (108). St. Gregory speaks of the awesome office

of the priesthood but greater are the penalties of disobedience to preach God's message to His people. The example of the prophets is that some accepted eagerly and some hesitated but all obeyed. He says: «Aaron was eager, but Moses resisted, Isaiah readily submitted, but Jeremiah was afraid of his youth, and did not venture to prophesy until he had received from God a promise and power beyond his year» (114).

e) Conclusion

In today's Church, we as priests need to be prophetic and vocal in addressing every issue: be it social, political, religious or whatever it may be. We need to reach all our people by combining our priestly office to that of the preaching ministry. St. John Chrysostom says that the priest catches one fish at a time, the preacher as prophet is a fisherman who with his net takes a multitude in one simple haul. The action of the priest, Chrysostom declares, is confined to one man; whereas the action of the preacher-prophet extends to the whole people. For that reason we all called to take seriously and restore the «prophetic ministry to our priestly office.»

Humanly speaking, one who enters the priestly ministry confronts much to make him afraid. Consider facing a congregation, Sunday after Sunday, of lawyers, doctors, teachers, bankers, insurance executives, engineers. Persons of highly important political and social positions. Shall the priest as preacher be afraid of what to say? Of course not. Fear not, says the Lord. God's people come to worship. They come to hear the Word of God. More important than law, or medicine, or engineering, God's man, the priest, is to deliver God's message as an «ambassador of Christ.» (2 Cor. 5:20). To the extent that the priest's mission becomes his existence, the proclamation of the Gospel has priority over all functions. The preaching of the word and the priestly ministry must be unselfish because the priest speaks not his own words, but God's, even though his own person is fully involved. St. Irenaeus says that; «every just leader has a priestly rank, and all the apostles of the Lord are priests, since they serve God and the altar». Let me finally conclude with a fervent wish of St. Gregory the Theologian directing it to Christ, «Who gave word to those who preach the Gospel with great power for the perfection of the Gospel, may he (Christ) Himself hold each one of us by our right hand, and guide us with His counsel and receive us with glory.»