

Know Them by Their Fruits

Today's Gospel provides is somewhat disturbing, yet encouraging message. It's discouraging in that there will be false prophets who come among God's people. These prophets, we are told, come in sheep's clothing. That is, they appear harmless, but like ravenous wolves devour their prey.

While disturbing, we are encouraged though because Jesus teaches that there will be signs to help us distinguish between a good and bad prophet. Good prophets will bear good fruit, while bad prophets will bear bad fruit.

To unpack this a little, it is helpful to ask, "What is a prophet?" We sometimes associate prophets with those who can predict the future. But they are much more than that. A prophet is messenger or a mouthpiece for God. He speaks whatever God wants. For example, in the Old Testament, God said to Jeremiah, "*You shall be as my mouth.*" (Jer. 15:19) As God's mouthpiece, then, the prophet will deliver whatever message the Lord gives – whether it is good or bad.

For us today, we no longer have prophets per se. Jesus Christ is God's perfect revelation. The Catechism says, "*The Son is his Father's definitive Word; so there will be no further Revelation after him*" (CCC 73). Prophets today, then, echo what Jesus has already revealed. Of course, they do so in a way that people can understand or in a way that pertains to people's lives.

Of course, some of what Jesus has to say is well received. Other teachings are very hard and not as well received. The prophet must deliver both the easy teachings and the hard. He or she must courageously speak the full truth in charity. What is more, his or her life must be in accord with the Gospel. As a good tree, he must bear fruit.

For us today, may we pray that God raise up good leaders for His Church who will speak the full truth in wisdom and charity. And what is more, may we pray that their lives witness to the message that they have been entrusted to preach.