

SIGNS OF A PROPHET

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First, a prophet is someone who listens attentively to the word of God, a contemplative, a mystic who hears God and takes God at God's word, and then goes into the world to tell the world God's message. So a prophet speaks God's message fearlessly, publicly, without compromise, despite the times, whether fair or foul.

Second, morning, noon, and night, the prophet is centred on God. The prophet does not do his or her own will or speak his or her own message. The prophet does God's will and speaks God's message. . . . In the process, the prophet tells us who God is and what God wants, and thus who we are and how we can become fully human.

Third, a prophet interprets the signs of the times. The prophet is concerned with the world, here and now, in the daily events of the whole human race, not just our little backyard or some ineffable hereafter. The prophet sees the big picture—war, starvation, poverty, corporate greed, nationalism, systemic violence, nuclear weapons, and environmental destruction. The prophet interprets these current realities through God's eyes, not through the eyes of analysts or pundits or Pentagon press spokespeople. The prophet tells us God's take on what's happening.

Fourth, a prophet takes sides [the "bias toward the bottom" or the "preferential option for the poor"]. A prophet stands in solidarity with the poor, the powerless, and the marginalized. . . . A prophet becomes a voice for the voiceless. Indeed, a prophet is the voice of a voiceless God.

Fifth, all the prophets of the Hebrew Bible are concerned with one main question: justice and peace. They call people to act justly and create a new world of social and economic justice, which will be the basis for a new world of peace. Justice and peace, they learned, are at the heart of God; God wants justice and peace here on earth now. And the prophet won't shy away from telling us that if we want a spiritual life, we must work for justice and peace.

Sixth, prophets simultaneously announce and denounce. They announce God's reign of justice and peace and publicly denounce the world's regimes of injustice and war. Like Martin Luther King, Jr., they hold high the alternatives of nonviolence and disarmament and lay low the obsolete ways of violence and weapons.

Gateway to Silence:

Do not be afraid.