



## Alton Day Of Renewal

# Guidance for the use of the Prophetic Ministry

### **BACKGROUND**

From the early days, Alton Day of Renewal has been blessed and guided by the charism or gift of prophecy. But what is prophecy? One simple definition is "a gift of speaking a message from God inspired by the Holy Spirit." St Paul valued prophecy: "let love be your highest goal, but also desire the special abilities the spirit gives, especially the gift of prophecy (1 Cor 14:1). "Do not quench the Spirit, do not despise prophesying, but test everything, holding fast to what is good" (1 Thess 5:19-21).

### **Prophecy in practice**

In recent years, many people in the Catholic church have benefited from the charism of prophecy, which is not about 'telling the future' but about communicating God's love and gentle guidance into people's lives. "I discovered that God actually speaks into our lives in a personal and powerful way" - Charles Whitehead. [From [Do you know how much God loves you?](#)] "A prophetic word can change your life. Prophecy if delivered correctly should always edify, encourage and comfort." - Geoff and Gina Poulter. "Before I experienced a prophetic word I was rather dismissive of the gift. Afterwards I saw it as a means of grace by which God ministers his love and brings new life." – Duncan Mitchell [From [Prophecy: A Beginners Guide.](#)]

### **Prophecy and Popes**

Cardinal Ratzinger (later Pope Benedict XVI) explained in 2000: "In every age the Church has received the charism of prophecy, which must be scrutinized but not scorned." [From [The Message of Fatima.](#)] Pope Paul VI said in 1972: "The Church needs fire in her heart, words on her lips, prophecy in her outlook." And in 2013 Pope Francis said "Let our prayer be: 'Lord, let there not be a lack of prophets among your people! Lord, free your people from a spirit of clericalism and aid them with a spirit of prophecy'."

### **Prophecy and Scripture**

True prophecy can never be in contradiction to the Scriptures or to the official teaching of the Church; but - in common with all the charisms - it can build up the faithful. For example, by helping them to grasp the significance of particular aspects of Scripture or Church teaching in particular situations.

### **Prophecy and the Catechism**

"...even if Revelation is already complete, it has not been made fully explicit; it remains for Christian faith gradually to grasp its full significance over the course of the centuries" (CCC66).

"Throughout the ages, there have been so-called 'private' revelations, some of which have been recognized by the authority of the Church... It is not their role to complete Christ's definitive Revelation, but to help live more fully by it in a certain period of history" (CCC67).

"...discernment of charisms is always necessary. No charism is exempt from being referred and submitted to the Church's shepherds. Their office [is] not indeed to extinguish the Spirit, but to test all things and hold fast to what is good," so that all the diverse and complementary charisms work together for the common good." (CCC801)

## **GUIDELINES**

### **Three Foundational Principles**

1. The primary purpose of prophetic ministry is to edify, encourage, and comfort God's people (1 Cor. 14:3).
2. All believers are exhorted to earnestly seek after spiritual gifts, especially prophecy (1 Cor. 14: 1).
3. All prophetic words must be judged/weighed by the body of Christ (1 Thess. 5: 19-22; 1 Cor. 14:29-35).

### **Three Suggestions for facilitating the Prophetic**

1. To encourage prophetic ministry (1 Cor. 14: 1), leaders must create a "safe" environment where people are willing to take risks.
2. Leaders must also be intentional in "making space" or creating opportunities for it to occur:  
*e.g. "Does anyone have a sense from the Lord about the direction of our meeting tonight?"*  
*e.g. "Does anyone believe they have a word from the Lord that they need to share"?*  
*e.g. "Did anyone receive a dream or vision recently that they believe the Lord would want them to share"?*
3. Don't be afraid of, or offended by, silence. Maybe God does not want to speak at this time.

### **Three Suggestions on how to Introduce and deliver a Prophetic Word**

1. Words should be given in a spirit of humility because (1Cor.13:9) 'we only prophesy in part'.
2. Avoid using dramatic and overly authoritative pronouncements like "Thus says the Lord" or "This is the Word of the Lord" or "God told me to tell you".
3. Consider carefully how you introduce what the Holy Spirit has put on your heart.  
*e.g. "I have a strong inner belief that what I have to share is from the Lord."*  
*e.g. "I have a picture in my mind that I think may be for someone here."*  
*e.g. "I had a sense from the Holy Spirit about what he wants to accomplish tonight."*  
*e.g. "I had a dream which involved several of you, and I would like to share it."*

### **Ten Guidelines for testing/judging/weighing Prophetic Words**

1. Does what is said align with Scripture?
2. Does what is said align with the Magisterium of the Church?
3. Does it confirm what the Holy Spirit is already doing?
4. Does the Leadership team (of ADORE) endorse the Word?
5. Does the broader believing community (the church) endorse the word?
6. Does it edify, encourage, and comfort? (1 Cor. 14:3)
7. If the word is predictive, does it actually come to pass?
8. Is it spoken in love and for the welfare of the recipient, or is it manipulative and serves only to draw attention to or promote the speaker? (1 Cor. 13)
9. Does it correspond to personal experience ( Acts 21 :4-5 & 21: 1 0-14 with Acts 20:22-23)?
10. Does the prophesy come from someone who's prophetic words have been confirmed in the past?

### **Four Suggestions for handling questionable "words" or those that lack the anointing of the Spirit**

1. Be gentle, kind hearted, and encouraging. Don't crush the spirit of the person or respond in a way that would make them fearful and hesitant to ever prophesy again.
2. Some "words" need immediate correction, especially if they are biblically misguided.
3. If the "word" is general or vague or merely a repetition of some biblical text or principle already well known, don't dismiss it, but commit as a group to pray about it and re-visit it at a later time.

4. If the "word" does not feel right or is weird or unintelligible or embarrassing, simply say:  
*"Thanks for sharing that. I think the group needs to pray and reflect on what you have said and we will get back to you later". or "I'm not sure this is the direction the Spirit is leading us at this time."*

### **Seventeen Practical "Do's" and "Don'ts" of Prophetic Ministry**

1. Do not publicly criticize or correct church leadership by name. Take such "words" privately to your Priest, Spiritual Director or ADORE Leadership team/Elders. The New Testament doesn't say "Be subject to the prophets" but rather "Be subject to the leaders/ Elders" (1 Pt. 5:5; Heb. 13:17).
2. Do not expose someone's sin or identify them by name. Speak of sin in general/anonymous terms and ask the Spirit to bring conviction (1 Cor. 14:24-25).
3. Be very careful with prophecy related to marriages, babies, moves, or job changes.
4. If God reveals a person's physical affliction, don't immediately assume or suggest he intends to heal them. But of course, pray for them!
5. Unless you have explicit biblical warrant, do not tell a person what "God's will" is for their life.
6. Be very careful with prophecy relating to public, political, or natural disasters.
7. Challenge prophecy that promotes doctrines, practices, or ethical principles that lack explicit biblical or magisterial support.
8. Don't appeal to prophecy to set behavioural standards on secondary issues (e.g., whether Christians should not view certain movies, drink alcohol, listen to secular music, visit certain social media sites etc.).
9. Be cautious about excessive dependence on prophetic words for making routine, daily decisions in life. There are, of course, certain exceptions to this "rule".
10. Always resist the pressure to prophesy on demand, in the absence of a divine revelation.
11. Always, resist the temptation to speak when God is silent. Some of the most severe denunciations and warnings of judgment are reserved for those who claim to speak for God, but don't. (Ezek. 13:1-9; Jer. 23:25-31).
12. Don't let your identity be dependent on your gifting. Remember that prophetically gifted people are often more sensitive than others and can be self-defensive. They are easily wounded by criticism. Remind them lovingly that they are not their gift!
13. Don't despise prophetic utterances when things go badly or when people are offended or when someone gets it wrong (1 Thess. 5: 19-22).
14. Resist the temptation/pressure always to interpret and apply the revelation you've received. Share what God has shown you and be quiet! Again, there are occasional exceptions to this "rule"
15. Devote sufficient time to helping visitors, unbelievers, understand prophetic ministry. They will often feel confused or find it weird. Make sure there is time to dialogue and debrief about what has (or has not) happened.
16. Be prepared to listen to the least of the brethren as the Lord uses such as these to confound the wise. (1 Cor 1:27).
17. Don't let prophetic ministry dominate the meeting. There are other spiritual gifts, the greatest of which is love.