

Elder Claudio R. M. Costa

A testimony of latter-day prophets

I am a convert to the Church. I am so grateful that God answered my prayer and gave me a knowledge and a strong testimony that Joseph Smith is a prophet of God.

Before I made the decision to be baptized in The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, I studied extracts from the history of Joseph Smith. I prayed after carefully reading each paragraph. If you would like to do this yourself, it may take you 14 hours.

After I read, pondered, and prayed, the Lord gave me the assurance that Joseph Smith was His prophet. I testify to you that Joseph Smith is a prophet, and because I have received this answer from the Lord, I know that all of his successors are prophets too. What a great blessing it is to have prophets in our day!

Importance of living prophets

Why is it important to have living prophets to guide the true Church of Jesus Christ and its members?

In the Guide to the Scriptures, we find the definition of the word *prophet*: “A person who has been called by and speaks for God. As a messenger of God, a prophet receives commandments, prophecies, and revelations from God” (“Prophet,” scriptures.lds.org; see also Bible Dictionary, “Prophet”).

It is a great blessing to receive the word, commandments, and guidance of the Lord in these difficult days of the earth. The prophet can be inspired to see the future in benefit of mankind.

We are told that “surely the Lord God will do nothing, but he revealeth his secret unto his servants the prophets” (Amos 3:7). We learn from this scripture that the Lord will reveal to His prophets absolutely anything that He feels is necessary

to communicate to us. He will reveal His will to us, and He will instruct us through His prophets.

The Lord promised us that if we believe in the holy prophets, we should have eternal life (see D&C 20:26). In the sixth article of faith, we declare that we believe in prophets. To believe means to have faith and confidence in them and to follow and do what the prophets ask us to do.

Fundamentals in following the prophet

In 1980, when President Ezra Taft Benson was serving as President of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles, he gave a powerful message about obedience to the prophets at a BYU devotional in the Marriott Center. His great talk, titled “Fourteen Fundamentals in Following the Prophet,” touched my heart. It made me feel good that I had made the decision to follow the prophets for the rest of my life when I accepted baptism in the Lord’s true Church.

I would like to share with you some of the principles that President Benson taught:

“First: *The prophet is the only man who speaks for the Lord in everything*” (“Fourteen Fundamentals in Following the Prophet,” in *1980 Devotional Speeches of the Year* [1981], 26).

In our day the prophet of God has told us to keep the commandments, to love our fellowman, to serve, to take care of the rising generation, to rescue the inactive or less active—to do many things that we call prophetic priorities. We need to understand that these priorities are God’s priorities and the prophet is His voice in communicating them to all of the Church and the world.

We are counseled to “give heed unto all his words and commandments” (D&C 21:4). We also learn:

“For his word ye shall receive, as if from mine own mouth, in all patience and faith.

“For by doing these things the gates of hell shall not prevail against you; yea, and the Lord God will disperse the powers of darkness from before you, and cause the heavens to shake for your good, and his name’s glory” (D&C 21:5–6).

Second fundamental: “*The living prophet is more vital to us than the standard works*” (“Fourteen Fundamentals,” 26).

The living prophet is receiving specific revelations for us. I can remember many times when I have been present to hear one of the servants of the Lord speak about a specific thing for a city or country. I remember at least three of the living prophets, seers, and revelators who have spoken about my country, Brazil. One of these servants said that Brazil would become a great economy in the world and be free of inflation. At the time, we had two-digit inflation every month. It was difficult for many people to believe what the prophet said, but I believed. Brazil has had about 5 percent inflation each year for many consecutive years now. Brazil has become eighth in the world economy, and the country is doing great!

Third fundamental: “*The living prophet is more important to us than a dead prophet*” (“Fourteen Fundamentals,” 27).

We learn a great lesson about this from the scriptures. In the times of Noah it was easier for the people to believe in the dead prophets, but it was difficult for them to believe in Noah. We know that because of their incredulity they did not survive the Flood (see Genesis 6–7).

Fourth fundamental: “*The prophet will never lead the Church astray*” (“Fourteen Fundamentals,” 27).

Again we learn from the living prophets. President Wilford Woodruff said: “The Lord will never permit me or any other man who stands as President of this Church to lead you astray. It is not in the programme. It is not in the mind of

God. If I were to attempt that, the Lord would remove me out of my place, and so He will any other man who attempts to lead the children of men astray from the oracles of God and from their duty” (in excerpts from three addresses following Official Declaration 1 in the Doctrine and Covenants).

Fifth fundamental: “*The prophet is not required to have any particular earthly training or credentials to speak on any subject or act on any matter at any time*” (“Fourteen Fundamentals,” 27).

The Lord called a young man, Joseph Smith, to restore His Church. Do you think that the young Joseph Smith was a doctor in theology or science? We know that he was a humble and not academically educated young man. But he was chosen by the Lord, and he received from the Lord all that was necessary to honor and magnify the calling of a prophet of the Restoration.

President Benson continued:

“Sixth: *The prophet does not have to say ‘Thus saith the Lord’ to give us scripture. . . .*

“Seventh: *The prophet tells us what we need to know, not always what we want to know*” (“Fourteen Fundamentals,” 27, 28).

And then President Benson quoted from 1 Nephi 16:1, 3:

“And now it came to pass that after I, Nephi, had made an end of speaking to my brethren, behold they said unto me: Thou hast declared unto us hard things, more than we are able to bear. . . .

“And now my brethren, if ye were righteous and were willing to hearken to the truth, and give heed unto it, that ye might walk uprightly before God, then ye would not murmur because of the truth, and say: Thou speakest hard things against us.”

Eighth fundamental: “*The prophet is not limited by men’s reasoning. . . .*

“. . . Does it seem reasonable to cure leprosy by telling a man to wash seven times in a particular river? Yet this is precisely what the prophet Elisha told a leper

to do, and he was healed. (See 2 Kings 5.)” (“Fourteen Fundamentals,” 28).

And President Benson continued giving other principles about obedience to the prophet. I will read the last six and invite you in your next family home evening to find these principles in the words and teachings of our living prophets, seers, and revelators during this general conference.

“Ninth: *The prophet can receive revelation on any matter—temporal or spiritual. . . .*

“Tenth: *The prophet may be involved in civic matters. . . .*

“Eleventh: *The two groups who have the greatest difficulty in following the prophet are the proud who are learned and the proud who are rich. . . .*

“Twelfth: *The prophet will not necessarily be popular with the world or the worldly. . . .*

“Thirteenth: *The prophet and his counselors make up the First Presidency—the highest quorum in the Church. . . .*

“Fourteenth: *The prophet and the presidency—the living prophet and the first presidency—follow them and be blessed; reject them and suffer*” (“Fourteen Fundamentals,” 29).

Prophetic counsel during conference

We are privileged to have the words of our living prophets, seers, and revelators during this wonderful general conference. They will speak the will of the Lord for us, His people. They will transmit the word of God and His counsel to us. Pay attention and follow their instruction and suggestions, and I testify to you that your life will be completely blessed.

Jesus is the Christ, our Savior and Redeemer. Thomas S. Monson is the living prophet of God, and the First Presidency and Quorum of the Twelve Apostles are prophets, seers, and revelators. In the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

President Eyring

The choir and congregation will now join in singing “Put Your Shoulder to the Wheel.” At the conclusion of the singing, Brother David M. McConkie, first counselor in the Sunday School general presidency, will address us, after which we shall hear from Elder D. Todd Christofferson of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles. The choir will then sing “Tell Me the Stories of Jesus.”

The choir and congregation sang “Put Your Shoulder to the Wheel.”

David M. McConkie

As a member of the Sunday School general presidency, I feel I should begin my remarks this morning by saying, “Good morning, class.”

Message for teachers

My message today is to all those who have been called to teach, in whatever

organization you are serving and whether you are a recent convert to the Church or a teacher with years of experience.

I am not going to talk about the “how” of teaching but rather about the “how” of learning. There can be a significant difference between what a teacher says and what those in the class hear or learn.