

Before I Formed You

Jeremiah 1

WHAT WE FOUND

The book of Jeremiah opens with a datebook, not a doctrine: a real man, a priest's son from the small town of Anathoth, in real named years under real named kings. God speaks into history, which is why our Creed carries a date and an address of its own.

Then we heard the call. Before Jeremiah existed, God had already **known** him, **consecrated** him, and **appointed** him (1:5), and Jeremiah had contributed exactly nothing. We found the same signature on other lives: Paul, set apart before he was born (Galatians 1:15), and John the Baptist, filled with the Holy Spirit from his mother's womb (Luke 1:15). God's call begins in God, not in our résumé. Jeremiah's consecration as a prophet was his alone; but because God's knowing precedes the womb, the Church has always heard in this verse the truth about every one of us: from its first moment, a human life is known, loved, and sacred, and owed the reverence we give what belongs to God.

We counted the six verbs of Jeremiah's commission: to pluck up and to break down, to destroy and to overthrow, and then to build and to plant (1:10). Four verbs of demolition, two of hope, and hope gets the last word. Then the almond branch: in Hebrew, almond sounds like watching, and the almond blooms first, while winter still holds. "I am watching over my word to perform it" (1:12). And God promised His prophet presence and deliverance, never an easy road.

MY GUESS · WRITE, FOLD, SEAL

Jeremiah's call ends with two verbs of hope: **to build and to plant**. By the last chapters of this book, what do you guess God will build and plant, and how will He do it? Write your guess below, fold this panel, seal or staple it, put your name on the outside, and hand it to your leader tonight. We will open these together later in the study. No changing your answer.

VOICES OF THE CHURCH

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St. Jerome · *Prologue to his Commentary on Jeremiah*

St. Jerome remarked that Jeremiah's style seems plainer than Isaiah's or Hosea's, yet he is their equal in the weight of his meaning. Take the lesson his observation offers us: God's power is not diminished by the ordinariness of His instrument, and neither is yours.

VOICES OF THE CHURCH

St. Gregory the Great · *Pastoral Rule, Book I, ch. 7*

St. Gregory contrasts Isaiah, who volunteers ("Here am I! Send me"), with Jeremiah, who resists ("I am only a youth"). Both responses can flow from love. Neither man trusted himself; both obeyed. Reluctance, offered honestly to God, can be the raw material of a vocation.

VOICES OF THE CHURCH

St. John Paul II · *Evangelium Vitae 44*

Reflecting on Jeremiah 1:5, St. John Paul II taught that the life of every human being belongs to God's loving plan from its very beginning. God's gaze rests on the child in the womb not as a potential person but as a person already known and loved.

Live It This Week

- Pray Jeremiah 1:5 back to God once each day, placing your own name inside it: "Before I formed you in the womb I knew you." Let it be the first thing you say to Him in the morning.
- Name one responsibility you have been dodging with your own version of "I am only a youth." Take one concrete step toward it before we meet again.
- If you do not know the date of your Baptism, find it this week. That was your consecration day. Write it somewhere you will see it.

Memory Verse

"Before I formed you in the womb I knew you, and before you were born I consecrated you; I appointed you a prophet to the nations." (Jeremiah 1:5, RSV2CE)

Before Next Session

Read Jeremiah 2-3.

Catechism References

CCC 1 · CCC 2270