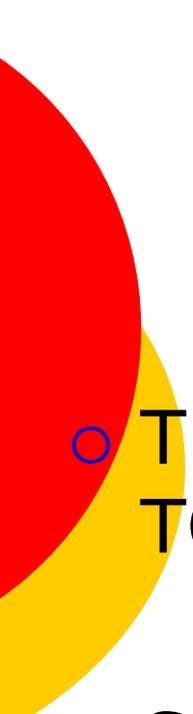


THE MYSTIC –PROPHETIC DIMENSION OF RELIGIOUS LIFE

SR. MARY JOHN MANANZAN, OSB



INTRODUCTION

- THERE IS A MYSTIC-PROPHETIC DIMENSION TO CHRISTIAN LIFE
- SINCE RELIGIOUS LIFE IS SUPPOSED TO BE CHRISTIAN LIFE LIVED RADICALLY, THERE IS THEREFORE A MORE RADICAL MYSTIC-PROPHETIC DIMENSION IN RELIGIOUS LIFE
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- THIS IS THE RESPONSE RELIGIOUS CAN GIVE TO THE CHALLENGES OF OUR TIMES



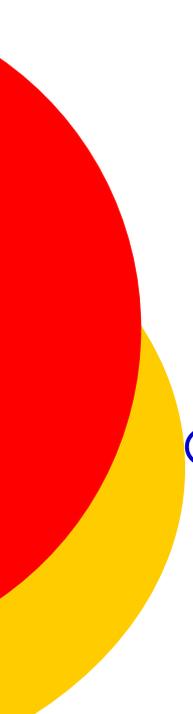
PERENNIAL PROBLEMS

- GLOBALIZATION
- CONTINUING POVERTY AND INJUSTICE
- CONTINUING OPPRESSION, EXPLOITATION AND VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN
- CONTINUING RAPE OF THE EARTH
- ENDEMIC CORRUPTION
- CRISIS IN GOVERNANCE



RECENT EVENTS

- Aside from these perennial problems recent events call for our mystic-prophetic response:
- THE PORK BARREL SCAM
- RECURRING NATURAL-HUMAN CATASTROPHES



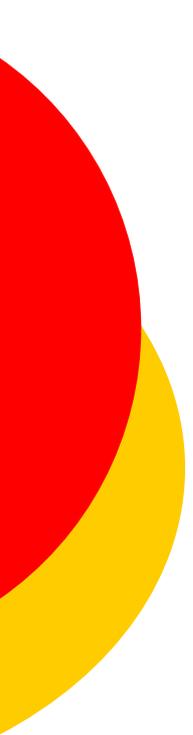
OUR RESPONSE

- This present situation challenges us religious to be both MYSTICS AND PROPHETS. It is important that we view these two aspects of our life not side by side but as interwoven.
- But it cannot be avoided that in trying to understand it, we have to reflect on these two aspects one by one.



INTRODUCTION

- The American Philosopher William Hocking said: THE PROPHET IS A MYSTIC IN ACTION.
- I would like to say in turn: THE MYSTIC IS A PROPHET IN CONTEMPLATION.
- In this talk let us reflect on how we, as monastic missionaries can concretize this interwovenness of contemplation and action in our lives.



WHAT IS A MYSTIC?

WHAT IS A MYSTIC?

- There seems to be quite a lot of confused notions and outright misconceptions about the word "MYSTIC"
- Mysticism is terrifically misunderstood by mainstream culture. Many people (incorrectly) think mysticism is some kind of odd occult -- someone who studies magic or renounces life and goes off to live in a cave.
- It is also not necessary to identify it with visions, stigmata or such extraordinary phenomenon.(maybe this could be termed Mystic with a capital M).
- Mystics don't always look like emaciated, humorless, ascetics pining their way to sanctity.



WHAT IS A MYSTIC- according to various spiritual writers

- FROM Ronda LARUE:
 - A mystic is one who, above all else in life desires to know (*not* in the intellectual sense of knowing) the deepest Truth of existence.
 - The primary interest in life for the mystic is to discover truth, to know God, to see into the whole nature of the human being ...
 - The mystic sees all of life as an abundant opportunity to discover, realize, and express the Divine.



What is a mystic

- From Ursula King

- The story of the Christian mystics is one of an all-consuming, passionate love affair between human beings and God.
- It speaks of the yearning, a burning desire for the contemplation and presence of the divine.
- This yearning is candle by the fire of divine love itself, which moves the mystics in their search and leads them often in arduous journeys, to discover and proclaim the all-encompassing love of God for humankind



Emilie Griffin

- there are many quiet, unrecognized mystics, mystics who fly below the radar.
- They are close to God, transformed by that relationship, but may never look like 'mystics' in the eyes of others.
- In fact, being a mystic has little to do with visions or ecstasies.
- Instead, a mystic is a person who very likely spends time in prayer and worship with a disciplined regularity.
- Wouldn't such a definition include a large number of people?"



SUMMARY

- 1. there is a spiritual journey that leads to a new consciousness—an awakening.
- 2. one is alone in embarking on this journey and each one's experience is unique
- 3. one goes through a desert experience (dark night of the soul) that results in a shift of consciousness and overturning of one's old life patterns
- 4. one's experience is beyond words .
- 5. This intimacy with God is above all a GIFT
- 6. The mystic somehow inspires and transforms others by their lives.



WOMB WHERE THE MYSTIC GROWS

- THREE IMPORTANT COMPONENTS OF THE ATMOSPHERE WHICH NURTURES THE MYSTIC
 - SILENCE
 - SOLITUDE
 - ASCETICISM

Kinds of silence

- **Negative silence-** frustrated silence, resentful silence , cowardly silence, silence of connivance, disapproving silence, punishing silence “silent treatment”, stupid silence
- **Positive silence-** religious silence , monastic silence

Inner silence

Religious silence is meant to facilitate conversation with God. It means:

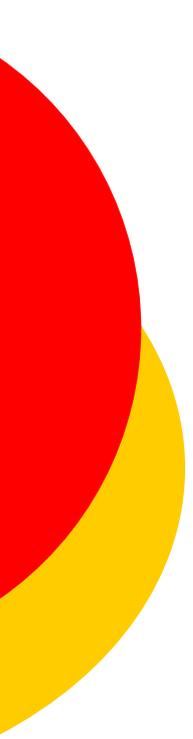
- Silence of the mind-
 - from negative thoughts, (bitter, jealous, envious, resentful, vengeful, quarrelsome)
 - From distracting thoughts (plans, daydreaming, worries, etc)
- Silence of the heart
 - From negative emotions: that flow from the thoughts
- (corollary virtue: DETACHMENT)

External silence

- BUT INNER SILENCE PRESUMES AND IS SUPPORTED BY OUTER SILENCE
 - Silence of place –the external environment- (garden, woods, forest, building) etc, helps greatly in the maintenance of inner silence.
 - Time and place of silence in monastic rules
 - Silence of the tongue.
 - Silence –avoidance of gossip, negative critique, hurtful remarks, angry outbursts, vain talk, idle chatter
 - Silence of movement

Fruits of silence- Fr. Benedict Lemeki, OSB

1. Monastic silence forms an attitude of MINDFULNESS of God's presence and fraternal (sororal) COMMUNION.
2. **In the midst of the state of silence one can listen and see people, situations, circumstances and things as they really are, and also identify and accept our own strength and weaknesses.**
3. **silence can become a time of healing and comforting.**
4. We were created from "no-thing" because God is the only no-thing (uncreated). And within that "no-thing" (God) there is everything. In the depth of nothingness there is everything. **In the midst of silence one who practicing it can encounter everything and find great light.**



SOLITUDE

NEED FOR SOLITUDE IN OUR TIME

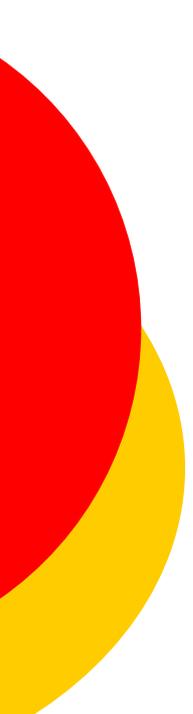
- As the world spins faster and faster we mortals need a variety of ways to cope with the resulting pressures. We need to maintain some semblance of balance and some sense that we are steering the ship of our life
- Otherwise we feel overloaded, overreact to minor annoyances and feel like we can never catch up. **One of the best ways is by seeking, and enjoying, solitude**
- Nouwen says: Solitude is the "furnace of transformation," where we struggle with our compulsions, meet the living God and engineer the death of the false self. **Solitude is a place of purification and encounter in which the transformation can take place.**

Solitude is a time for SELF-CONFRONTATION

It is also a time for an ENCOUNTER WITH THE UNKNOWN

Loneliness vs. solitude

- Solitude is the state of being alone without being lonely. It is a positive and constructive state of engagement with oneself. Solitude is desirable, a state of being alone where you provide yourself wonderful and sufficient company.
- Loneliness is a negative state, marked by a sense of isolation. One feels that something is missing. It is possible to be with people and still feel lonely perhaps the most bitter form of loneliness
- Solitude is something you choose, loneliness is imposed from by circumstances
- Solitude is a voluntary and authentic withdrawal from social life in order to come to terms with our aloneness



Blessings of solitude

- Solitude is a time that can be used for reflection, inner searching or growth or enjoyment of some kind
- Solitude suggests peacefulness stemming from a state of inner richness. It is a means of enjoying the quiet and whatever it brings that is satisfying and from which we draw sustenance. It is something we cultivate. Solitude is refreshing; an opportunity to renew ourselves. In other words, it replenishes us
- It gives us time to explore and know ourselves. It is the necessary counterpoint to intimacy, what allows us to have a self worthy of sharing. Solitude gives us a chance to regain perspective. It renews us for the challenges of life. It allows us to get (back) into the position of driving our own lives, rather than having them run by schedules and demands from without.
- Solitude restores body and mind

COMPASSION-THE FRUIT OF SOLITUDE

- In contemplative prayer, according to Merton, we pass through the center of our own being into the very being of God where we see ourselves and our world with a clarity, a simplicity, a truthfulness that is not available in any other way. And it is this view of reality which the contemplative must bring to bear upon the social order.
- For the religious, celibate solitude has as its primary purpose the fostering of such contemplation within which the religious participates in the divine perspective from which prophecy arises.

What is asceticism

- The word *asceticism* comes from the Greek *askesis* which means practice, bodily exercise, and more especially, athletic training. it embodies a metaphor taken from the ancient wrestling-place or palaestra, where victory rewarded those who had best trained their bodies.
- The early Christians adopted it to signify the practice of the spiritual things, or spiritual exercises performed for the purpose of acquiring the habits of virtue.

Christian Asceticism

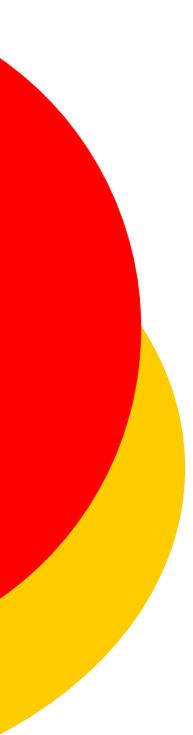
- Now the life of the Christian is, as Christ assures us, a struggle for the kingdom of heaven (Matthew 11:12).
- To give his readers an object-lesson of this spiritual battle and moral endeavour, St. Paul, who had been trained in the Greek fashion, uses the picture of the Greek pentathlon (1 Corinthians 9:24).
- The exercises to be assumed in this combat tend to develop and strengthen the moral stamina, while their aim is Christian perfection leading up to the ultimate end, union with God.
- Human nature having been weakened by original sin and ever inclining toward what is evil, this end cannot be reached except at the price of overcoming, with God's grace, many and serious obstacles.
- ASCETICISM THEREFORE IS NEVER AN END BUT A MEANS—

Monastic Asceticism

- In Church history, there had been developments of exaggerated unhealthy asceticism which not only damaged the body but even one's spiritual life.
- So we have to be guided by common sense and moderation



A PROPHET IS A MYSTIC IN
ACTION, A MYSTIC IS A
PROPHET IN CONTEMPLATION

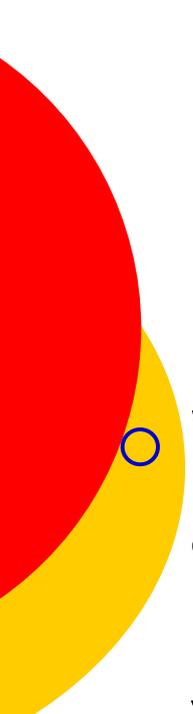


WHAT IS A PROPHET?



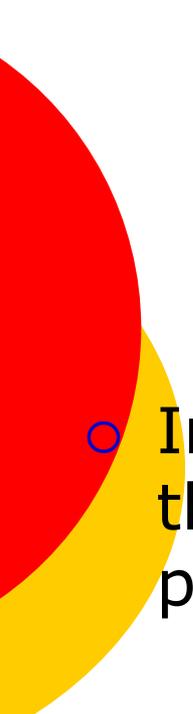
WHAT IS A PROPHET?

- Like the word “mystic” , the word “prophet” is also largely misunderstood. It does not mean being able to tell the future.
- It does not mean going about proclaiming the end of the world, etc.
- Again it would be good to compare some spiritual writers’ description or definition of the word to get to its essence,



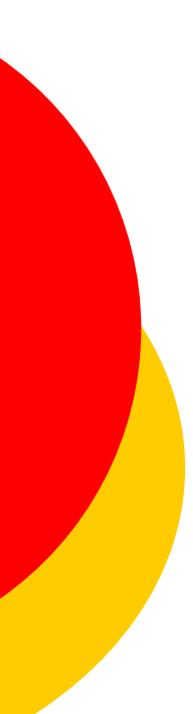
Father John Lombardi

- What is a prophet? What is a prophetic act? Simply put: Stand up, speak out. Use words if necessary. Let Jesus use you to be His instrument to challenge dominant forces .
- That's what the prophets of the Bible did-they stood up, spoke out.
- To be a prophet-which we should all be in some fashion-takes courage and love and faith in today's culture of malaise.



Dennis Bratcher

- In looking at Old testament prophets .. it is clear that their message was most often calling the people back to proper worship of God.
- But much of that task was done in the context of the community, the nation, of Israel.
- That meant that much of the criticism of the prophets was leveled at religious leaders (which included what we would call "political" leaders) for their failure to be spiritual leaders).



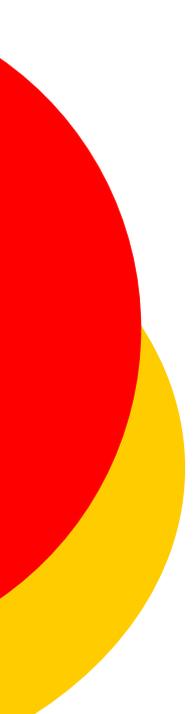
Dennis Batchers..

- . It was also aimed at the powerful, most often also the religious leaders, who used their power and influence for selfish or sinful purposes.
- The prophets were a balance to the unrestrained power of the monarchy and the aristocracy (cf. 1 Sam 8:11-17)



Dennis Batchter

- They spoke for God to the people, calling the people to respond faithfully to the God who had revealed Himself in their history.
- But they also spoke for the weak, the oppressed, the disenfranchised, those who had little voice in shaping their own lives or their own future.

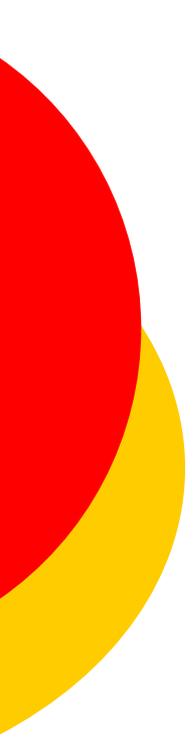


Rev. Slyde Moran

- MOST of the messages delivered to the people by the Old Testament Prophets were NOT 'predictions of the future" - but rather messages of:
 - - Edification: (building up of the people by way instruction in righteousness)
 - Exhortation: (Warnings and Admonishment to Obey the Lord)
 - Comfort: (Encouragement to be strong and courageous and to Trust in the Lord)

Some characteristics of prophets

- They have a vision or a sense of calling (they announce the good news)
- They speak out against injustice, bigotry, false religiosity. They disturb the status quo- (they denounce the bad news)
- They act in spite of fear
- They are not “team players” but are usually a voice crying in the wilderness.
- They speak out of love not out of arrogance
- They are usually beheaded physically or symbolically



THE PATHS OF A MYSTIC-PROPHET



I find the mystic and the prophet
most interwoven in Meister
Eckhart's PATHS OF
SPIRITUALITY which has been
popularized by Matthew Fox as
Creation Centered Spirituality



THE PATHS

- VIA POSITIVA
- VIA NEGATIVA
- VIA CREATIVA
- VIA TRANSFORMATIVA



VIA POSITIVA

- *"THOU SHALT FALL IN LOVE AT LEAST THREE TIMES A DAY!"*
- REFLECT ON ALL THE GOOD THINGS YOU HAVE RECEIVED IN LIFE– your body, family, friends, nature, opportunities, escapes, etc.
- AWE WONDER GRATITUDE
- GENEROSITY



VIA NEGATIVA

- *"THOU SHALT DARE THE DARK"*
- HOW DO YOU FACE THE NEGATIVE EVENTS IN YOUR LIFE?
- CRISIS ACCEPTANCE
-
- SURRENDER GRIEVING
- HEALING-WOUNDED HEALER
- FROM VICTIM -----> SURVIVOR---
→ADVOCATE



VIA CREATIVA

- *"THOU SHALT NOT BE RELUCTANT TO GIVE BIRTH"*
- CREATIVITY –FAMILY RESEMBLANCE
- IMAGINATION RISK
- SENSE OF BEAUTY
- PLAYFULNESS



VIA TRANSFORMATIVA

- “BE YOU COMPASSIONATE AS YOUR HEAVENLY FATHER/MOTHER IS COMPASSIONATE”
- PROPHETIC
- SOCIAL INVOLVEMENT
- COMMITMENT TO JUSTICE
- PASSION AND COMPASSION



AREAS OF PROPHECY TODAY

- POVERTY AND INJUSTICE- ECONOMIC AND POLITICAL EMPOWERMENT
- WOMEN ISSUES- GENDER EQUALITY AND EMPOWERMENT OF WOMEN
- ECOLOGICAL CRISIS- INTEGRITY OF CREATION
- CULTURE OF VIOLENCE –CULTURE OF PEACE
- CULTURE OF CORRUPTION- COMMITMENT TO TRUTH
- CRISIS OF GOVERNANCE- SYTEMIC CHANGE AND NEW POLITICS

CONCLUSION: CALL TO BE MYSTIC –PROPHETS

- As religious, we have the difficult but unique calling, to be both mystic and prophet. If we live these two aspects not side by side but as interwoven, we will be less likely to feel alienated from God even when we are overworked . At prayer, we bring with us the sufferings and misery of the world and refreshed by the Word of God and the encounter with the Living Water within ourselves, we cannot but bring the compassion and love of God to the suffering world. We understand ourselves to be as St. Paul expressed it: SEIZED BY CHRIST(mystic) AND SENT BY CHRIST(prophet).



FOR THE PROPHET-MYSTIC:
LIFE IS DANCING WITH THE
PLAYFUL CONSCIOUSNESS OF
GOD!