



NRVC
National Religious
Vocation Conference

2022 CONVOCAATION CALL BEYOND BORDERS

HANDOUT TO ACCOMPANY THE VIDEO PRESENTATION BY **SISTER BARBARA E. REID, O.P.**



Here I am: Responding to the call to go beyond

SISTER BARBARA E. REID, O.P. invites us to reflect on "what biblical prophets can offer us in understanding and accepting the call to be prophetic, and then probe one aspect of prophetic vocation—that of moving beyond borders, beyond our comfort zones, in particular, choosing to stand with those on the margins."

Before/after watching the video on the NRVC YouTube Channel (tinyurl.com/56ezwhub), reflect on the biblical passages and following selected quotes from the presentation to ponder the significance of our own story of call and endless response to be stretched beyond our own borders to "denounce injustices, particularly systemic injustices, and announce hope to those who are most vulnerable."



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video

The prophetic call and response of Mary of Nazareth (Luke 1:28-56)

- The fundamental element in every call story is that the person has an unexpected encounter with God or God's messenger in the midst of their everyday life.
- Authentic prophets always resist God's call. Mary responds to Gabriel that what he's asking is impossible (Luke 1:34). And, indeed, behind the objections is the realization that what God asks of a prophet is beyond human capabilities. Not only that, prophets also realize the cost of saying yes.
- Prophets do not know what lies ahead; they are not predictors of the future. Nor does God give them special blueprints for how to fulfill their mission. With trust that God is faithful to the divine promises, Mary says yes to the call.
- Lest I leave the impression that saying yes to a prophetic call is only heavy and burdensome, let me also call attention to Gabriel's greeting to Mary, "Chaire" (1:28). Chaire is the common greeting "Hail," but it also means "Rejoice" and points to the joy that the prophet's announcements of good news bring not only to those being lifted up from desperation but also to the prophet herself.
- Prophets do not disengage from the world. Whether as members of active apostolic communities or as enclosed contemplatives, we are deeply immersed in the world and love it as God does (John 3:16)—agents of transformation toward a fuller manifestation of God's reign.
- While prophetic actions are the fruit of our contemplation, our call is not simply to action; it is a call into intimate relationship with the One who loves us beyond all comprehension. There is no reason to move beyond borders unless it is to share with others this profound love and to experience it as well.

FOR REFLECTION, DISCUSSION

How does the image of Mary as prophet speak to you? When was the last time you experienced profound joy/love that moved you beyond your own borders? How did you share this experience with others?

While we do not know the future of religious life, what holds you back from listening to the concerns, fears, hopes, and dreams of young people? How have you experienced young people as prophetic?

While God is indeed doing something new in our day, being prophetic in responding to God's call is not new for us at all. As we reflect with members of our congregations on how we have responded to the prophetic call in the past, surely the Spirit will help us to discern where God is calling us now, both within and beyond our current borders.

—SISTER BARBARA E. REID, O.P.

(Continued on reverse side)



The prophetic ministry of Jesus in his encounters with a Samaritan woman (John 4:4-42)

■ I want to reflect now on two Gospel episodes in which Jesus, who is depicted as a prophet, in each of the Gospels, is called to cross boundaries of difference. Both involve an encounter that Jesus has with a woman.

■ Many interpreters speak of this story as a one-way revelation as Jesus shows himself to be the Messiah and the woman comes to believe. But I want to invite you to see that there is a continual back-and-forth in their exchange; it is a mutual self-revelation, as each shares more and more of who they are. It is not a one-way street. It is a journey from enmity to friendship—two peoples who have been at odds for eight centuries, are able to listen to one another and forge the deepest of bonds.

FOR REFLECTION, DISCUSSION

What does this story say to you about deliberately seeking out one who is “other” to move from enemies to friends? Or from the perspective of the woman, staying to engage in an unexpected conversation that opens up immense gifts that flow over to others? Or from the point of view of the disciples who are way out of their comfort zone and can’t understand why Jesus would talk with this woman? What would it take for them to engage with Samaritans like Jesus did?

Vocation ministry involves mutual accompaniment that begins with an encounter. What places can you be present where young people are already gathered? Newer entrants indicate meeting with members of the religious institute as most helpful in their discernment. Describe a time you risked leaving your comfort zone to start an unexpected conversation with someone you did not know.

The unwanted encounter with a Canaanite woman (Matt. 15:21-28)

■ Something shifts in Jesus. He recognizes that [the Canaanite woman] is right, his vision has been too narrow. She stretches him to see her not as “other,” or as “enemy,” but as one of his own, one with whom he shared a common humanity, a common faith in God, a common desire for the well-being of all children. He recognizes her great faith, a significant moment in this Gospel, when the Matthean Jesus so often chides his disciples for their “little faith” (Matt. 6:30; 8:26; 14:31; 16:8; 17:20).

■ Unlike the episode with the Samaritan woman, Jesus did not initiate this exchange. In fact, he deliberately tried to avoid dealing with this woman. But she does not give up and eventually makes him see her and see that they share a common humanity and a common concern for children. By the end of the Gospel, he will send his disciples to do what he himself did not do: Go into the whole world and make friends and disciples outside their circle.

FOR REFLECTION, DISCUSSION

Newer entrants are committed to living simply and in solidarity with the poor. How can we move from serving with the poor to inviting them to vocation discernment? What might this Gospel episode say to us about unwanted encounters that call us beyond our borders?

A prophet listens deeply to the cries of the people, most especially to those on the margins, and listens equally intently to God’s word, God’s will for all people, and all creation to flourish. Who are the people you have intentionally or unintentionally marginalized and what would it mean to listen deeply to their cries?

As we try to discern and respond to new things God is doing in our day, Pope Francis captured one of the most important aspects in his Apostolic Letter to All Consecrated People when he declared the Year of Consecrated Life in November 2014. He said, “I am counting on you “to wake up the world” since the distinctive sign of consecrated life is prophecy...This is the priority that is needed right now.”

—SISTER BARBARA E. REID, O.P.