

Larry Ward
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Profound Function of the Religious Order

My father used to say lots of things to me, as you can imagine. But only a few of those ever stuck with me, as you can imagine. One of the things that did stick is "Larry, as you go out to live your life in the midst of the world, remember if you ever come upon a jackass that is loaded with sacks of gold, be sure that you are clear about the difference between the jackass and the gold." I have always found that releasing, whether in relating to every human being or to myself. When I received the assignment for this talk I was well contexted. My colleague on the regulatory started off by saying, "Now, what's important about the talk is that you be passionate. It is irrelevant that you are doing it - anybody could. The only issue is passion. So go be passionate."

One of the closing celebrations for the July Prep Task Force was held at a Guardian's home in Evanston. On the way there we decided we would drive past the Evanston House, our first location in Chicago. So we all piled into the Student House van and drove up to Evanston. None of us could remember exactly where the house was. We kept thinking of other street names until finally McCleskey said "Asbury". So we drove around and found it. We pulled upside and parked. McCleskey started telling stories about where different families lived, where the kitchen was, and where the collegium room was, and on and on. We were like kids listening to stories. It was not being sentimental, especially when you remember we'd even had trouble finding the house. Forty-five minutes later someone said - "We've been here so long the van is fogged." Then after another 45 minutes of storytelling someone else said "Don't you think we should go on to our celebration, it's getting late."

As we left the Evanston House, we decided we needed gasoline. We had only a quarter of a tank of gas when we left the nexus but thought we would see how far we could go. Certainly we will make it to Evanston on this amount of gas. We stopped at the nearest gas station. As we stood filling the tank, Joel said, "Hey, Larry, isn't that the church where you got ordained?" He was pointing to the church next door to this gas station. I look up and said "Oh, yea, it is. Wow." I could not even remember the name of the congregation. I had to walk around to the front of the church to look at the name.

That ordination was 10 years ago. I have never publically reflected on that event. Two things struck me. One was the preparation process. In the tradition of the Baptist Church you give trial sermons, which the congregation grades. They decide. They do an artform conversation. Is this a good sermon or is the guy full of baloney or what? I preached several trial sermons. I did the last sermon on the Sunday before I got ordained. At that time the congregation finally gave the go-ahead. "He doesn't seem to do any better but he does come back regularly." The title of that sermon was 'For God So Loved the World That He Sent the Church That Who So Ever Might Encounter Them Might Know and Live Profound Humanness Forever'.

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I promised I wouldn't do a 4 x 4. Now, of course, after thinking overnight, I have one. I wouldn't stand up to do a talk without one. I am going to do a sermon. This is not a lecture, nor a talk. But there are four points in it. The first one is, we are in the destinal moment of religious vocation. The second point is the historical journey of religious vocation from the perspective of the past, the present and the future. The third point is the post-modern invention of religious vocation. The last is the prophetic imagery of the Second Turn.

In the collegium on the ritual process the journey of civilization from pre-civilization to civilization to post-civilization was rehearsed. The transition times have always been times of radical breakthrough. We have used the term resurgence to point to those times. Others refer to these as times of liminality, or the times of anti-structure. The first time I went to San Francisco I did not know where I was. It totally undid my image of what society is, both in the past and the future. The world is coming out of a time of liminality and is struggling deeply with the task of restoration. Have you read the book The Nine Nations of North America? The northern part of my region is the Foundry - the old economic, steel production, industrial base of the United States. The southern part of our region is Dixie. I am radically conscious of both those realities as I look at the whole region. Everytime I drove to one of the regional cities to get to a meeting at 4 o'clock and then drove back at midnight or later to get in time for daily office and collegium, I was clear that I might not come back. When the consult team arrived in that town, one of the members said, "You didn't really tell me where we were going to be. What this was going to be like. We could get our heads blown off down here doing this." The world has had a rise of reactionism, of reaction to the actual promise of the earthrise. The death seen in movies is a witness to the resurgence going on - the reactionism that you experience. The Moral Majority began in our region. The KKK is increasing in our region. There are camps in our region where families - men, women and children - spend weekends learning how to shoot. So you ask yourself, what does this mean for us as a people?

I think the image of restoration is right. The contradiction today is how do you change society? Up to now we have primarily had only the adversarial mode of change - the conflict mode of change, symbolized by the military-industrial complex of the globe. What is being called for is a mode of change that is complementary, co-creative change. Restoration is about that. Reconciliation is another part of what this change is about. Without profound reconciliation to this world and the other world and its reality, there is no change. There is only superficial activity. Daniel Yankelovich wrote a book in which he said that the new ethic that is emerging is the ethic of commitment. Society is deeply searching for the ethic of commitment. The woman who wrote the book on three-way marriages has written a new book on covenant. In this she witnesses to the necessity of covenant in terms of what it means to be an authentic person and an authentic community. So the world is yearning for and moving into restoration. Restoration is the challenge of our time.

As you look at the journey of people who've been vocated to the task of care, you can think back to the age of the desert. A religious vocation was born in North Africa/Middle East. I think the desert and the heat has something to do with consciousness. In that situation a person gets very clear about the way life is and is forced to come to terms with life being more than just one person's interpretation of it. It was born with the desert hermits. Then a strange thing happened around 500 A.D. The hermits discovered they could not be vocated separately. Thus the age of monasticism, of corporate living, came into being. In both of those phases, young widows played a pioneering role in bringing this image into being. Then around 1500 A.D., Orders expanded across the globe and covered the planet. Xavier and Ursula are examples of that time. The next phase is the age of teaching congregations. In every book I have studied on religious orders there is a question mark for the post-modern time, the period after the age of the teaching congregations. I have been trying to describe the operating image from which the orders grasped their knowing, doing and being - their teaching, service and contemplation in the midst of the world. I wonder if the question underneath many of the questions that exist today isn't really "Is religious vocation an authentic response to life?" "Is religious vocation an authentic response to post-modern times?" The age is so secular. But I believe the question that is on the table is the one of religious vocation. This past year I have been rocked by the number of people who say we are the answer to that question. We are the demonstration and embodiment of the religious vocation as an authentic response in our time.

Some people think religious is a primitive category. Now that we are all so educated. Our world is learning anew that profound consciousness is not an alternative. It is the way life is. How you relate yourself to profound consciousness is the struggle of your life.

As I study religious orders, there are three images I find helpful. First is the life cycle, the dynamics of the life cycle of an order in history. The dynamic is a circle that goes round and round. At the beginning of a cycle is foundation and at the end is the critical period. In between the foundation and the critical period are three phases, or dynamics. There's the expansion phase or what some talk about as the exponential leap. It took the Ursulines 30 years to get founded. During the 150 years of the expansion phase, membership went from 65 to 15,000 people. That's what I call an exponential leap. The stabilization period is next. The length of that period in the history of the Ursuline Order lasted almost 100 years. Next is the breakdown period which spanned 60 years for the Ursulines. The length of these periods varies from order to order. Since life is dynamical each order discovers it experiences overlaps and characteristics of all the periods in any specific time. The end of the cycle or the critical period is when new questions get raised by the community. There are three possibilities when the questions get raised. One is to quit and become extinct. That has happened in many, many instances. The second possibility is to continue with the minimal survival. The third alternative is restoration - to change.

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You might look at civilization through that same screen of periods. Society is at the critical point now, ⁺the point where questions get raised. When these questions occur a new journey happens. In the movie All That Jazz there are at least two stories unfolding at the same time. One story is about the main character, his relationships and his journey. Behind that story there is this sort of Lenny Bruce character who kept talking about death. He talked about denial, anger, bargaining and acceptance - denial, anger, bargaining, acceptance. When new questions get raised in a community's life, it experiences denial, anger, bargaining and acceptance. That's just what life is like.

When new questions get raised, there's a period of breakdown and conflict. You can see this period in Lorimor, Ivy City, Woburn Lawn or any community in covenant. And people experience doubt - four kinds of doubt. The first level of the doubt experience is operational doubt. If I spend half the year writing a talking paper will anybody read it? Will it ever get where I send it? Will anybody ever know? You can think of many experiences of operational doubt. The second phase of the doubt experience is ideological doubt. This is when you are perplexed with the question of the relevancy of your own intellectual framework in contrast with the world's framework. You are no longer sure whether your common memory is common or memory - or is on target. Everything is up for grabs. The archives grow with dust. The third kind of doubt is ethical doubt. Here the question is whether you should be doing something else. Maybe some other group, some other community, some other family or some other something is where you need to be working.

The last level is absolute doubt. The workability of all things completely breaks down. This is where you say there is no way. It has bottomed out. When that level is reached in the journey of the community, it struggles deeply to accept the contradictions it experiences. It launches into a phase of darkness and exploration - probing, experimenting, learning about what the future is calling for. You chart our life as a community that way. We have had periods of darkness and exploration.

This exploration and darkness converge at a point of new insight and synthesis. This convergence is the next major turning point after accepting the contradictions in life. The July Prep Task Force must have received 85 notes about how these labs related. The moment any two items are before us we all want to know how they are related. We are yearning and searching for the synthesis, the putting-it-together, the coherency of what we are now being called to know and do and be in history.

The last phase in the journey of perpetual repentance is the new venture and reintegration which ends with celebration. It is important to remember that it is a continual circle, not a straight life process. Every part of the dynamic appears in every phase. We know that is true.

As I reflected on this pull-together of some studies on religious orders, I was intrigued that some years ago we told, (and in some cases we still do tell) people about God - how everything passes away. We thought of the most dramatic illustrations we could in order to make it clear that you are not finally in charge of life but a creaturely participant in it. We also used illustrations like "My wife is the wrath of God in my life" to ground the everydayness of the intrusion. Then we would continue and reflect on the dynamics of what it means to be seized, offended, make a new decision and die to the old image in order to live the new image. We used to dance back and forth using this poetry to assault people's consciousness. As I reflect on the journey of orders and our relationship to that struggle I am even more intrigued with the word 'ambiguity' and relativity in the '80s. I think it has become what you decide used to be in the '70s. You can decide. And now ambiguity was a big thing. Relativity is a big thing. I remember there was a point in the lecture on freedom about ambiguity. Ambiguity was only one part of a greater point on what it means to be exposed in the midst of history - to have your hocks engaged in history. Under that exposed category there is not only relativity but others called critical intelligence and consequence. Ambiguity is only 1/16th of freedom. It's important to keep it in perspective. Everybody used to say the freedom lecture is the dance of the weekend - dancing with this huge rock on your back. I watch us struggle with freedom today. We melt like a candle overagainst a blast furnace with one little damn category called ambiguity. God is what ambiguity is about. That's not a problem.

This year three of us visited Father John Whelan, the past dean of Catholic University in the United States and president of the Consortium of Universities in Washington D.C. We went to talk to him to see how he could help us find a new facility. We presented our proposal. He said "Sure I'll help you find a new facility, that is no problem. But wait a minute. Let me tell you something about who you are, because you obviously don't know."

This is hard on a Protestant. You have to understand the Reformation to understand our pain in dealing with the corporate community. None of us have been educated to deal with that. We talked some time ago about the Protestant principle and the Catholic substance. We had better learn a lot more about the Catholic substance if we are going to do two million villages. If there isn't a community of people who will put their bodies on the line to do two million villages, the whole image of two million villages is just an empty vision and a lie about the potential of humanity. There has to be a community that puts its life on the line to see to it that it happens in history, not on paper and not in somebody's head.

Father Whelan said, "Do you know what you all have done? You have invented the post-modern form of an Order." So we sat back in our chairs, and said, all right, go ahead, explain it. He said basically three things. "You have created an ecumenical form in which the classic religious of history can profoundly dialogue in terms of their service to the world and the meaning of what it means to stand before God. You have created a secular institution through which you can serve the world quite apart from the classical religions. And you have created a body of people, of men and women, and families, and children, that is pluriform, which is what is required for the world to even hear anyone speak." We were rocked.

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On another visit this year, a member of the Board of Directors and I met Mr. Bell, executive director of the Inter America Foundation in Washington. We have been visiting them since we launched our projects in Latin America. We have been submitting proposals and calling on them. They have done site visits. Mr. Bell took us to a meeting with all his Latin American representatives. He began this way: "I know about your projects, our people have visited your projects in many locations, we've read your reports, we've heard about all the controversy and your projects are phenomenal. They are an incredible demonstration of comprehensive development. I'm not worried about your projects. But I would like you to tell us one thing, Mr. Ward. Tell us about the Order."

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if phenomenal

The first time we went to visit Mr Bell, we walked in and sat down. He said "Just a minute." He went to the file cabinet, pulled out copies of Kazantzakis, daily office, speeches that still would curl anybody's hair and newspaper articles. He just pulled them right out of the drawer. "Are you the people who are related to this?" We swallowed 85 times. Finally we got a weak little "yes" out. And he said, "Well, thank God. Somebody needs to be doing this because we are in trouble in this world."

Part of my assignment this last year was attending with some of your colleagues the USAID Advisory Committee meetings to the government, to the private sector, and to the private voluntary organizations. At the first meeting we attended a representative from the Committee on Foreign Aid from the United States Congress came in and made an announcement. Basically it was that every private voluntary organization that they now support will have to reduce its estimation of what will be coming from the Federal Government. Next year it will be 20 percent less. The next year it will be 40 percent and so forth. We were the only people in the room who did not pass out. You have to understand it is our Order and our Order alone that gives us the capacity to go to the two million without having to be dependent on structures - without having to wait on the structures - although we are structural people.

One of the things I've discovered about people in Washington is that it is full of religious. Those people have been close enough to the structures and meetings about the future of the world to see that the current mode of operation is not going to win. It just isn't. The quiet conversation in the halls of the Congress and the Senate is not only does the Emperor have no clothes - nobody is dressed! The structures are not capable, which my region illustrates.

Another thing I learned as I studied is that when an order begins to move from its founding period into the period of its exponential leap there is a crisis at the point of its norms. Its norms consist of four elements: the founding mythology, the beliefs (what do we believe), the expectations and the actions. So I did a little exercise, a little chart. Across the top I wrote The Ecumenical Institute, The Institute of Cultural Affairs, The Order:Ecumenical. On the side I put Actions, Expectations, Beliefs and Founding Myth.

For years I have been doing programs as the ICA. When I went to Jamaica to do an ITI, I was The Ecumenical Institute. I had an identity crisis. All across the globe, we are still being the Ecumenical Institute, but our propensity is not to live out of that story. Our propensity is to think linearly about who we are. We had one phase when we were The Ecumenical Institute, another when we were the ICA and maybe we'll have a phase where we are the Order. That does not make any sense. At least it doesn't seem to be the way God works. We are all of these three and they are the post-modern form of religious vocation, the post-modern form of an order.

As you look at the chart under The Ecumenical Institute and in the action categories, you see contextual re-education or how we enable people to have a profound grasp of their own heritage. So that through the poetry that has been instilled in them from the day they were born, they can experience the call to serve the whole universe with that sem poetry. Contextual re-education. The expectation of The Ecumenical Institute is theological integrity. I have had people come up to me after a lecture or a seminar and say "Hey man, wait a minute. What you've said isn't true about life. It may be your opinion about life, but it is not true about life." Theological integrity was the expectation. The Monday after I took RS-I, I went to pedagogy. Then I came here for a weekend. I can't even remember the person's name who talked me into riding up here. "Let's drive to Chicago." Sure, sure. I came to 'visit The Ecumenical Institute'. When I arrived, I was given two choices. I could either participate in the family course which was being developed or a pedagogy session. I chose the pedagogy session. I had no idea what that meant. All Friday night, I prepared to do Tillich. I would ask one simple little question and the answer would take the floor out from under me. Theological integrity was the expectation in these sessions. Authenticity is an eternal category.

What does The Ecumenical Institute believe? It believes in the limits, possibilities, life style of freedom and the capacity for corporate vocatin. That's what history rides on the back of. Then I asked myself, what was the founding mythology out of which The Ecumenical Institute lived? I think it had to do with the birth of the 20th Century cultural revolution which flowed through the consciousness of the church and ushered in a new era of its renewal.

Next I did a similar exercise on The ICA. I said, what is the action of The ICA? It is community reformulation, going for broke with the local people of this globe. Their local revolution is manifest both in communities and in structures. It is manifest in youth, women, minorities, the Third World, multinational corporations and education. Going for broke on the fact that anybody can pick up their life and use it to change their history, and therefore, the history of the globe. The expectation of The ICA is sociological integrity. If you try to be abstract you will get two weeks of standing in mud building a building. You will get backbreaking work for hours and hours and hours. You will walk up l-o-n-g hills, and down long hills. You will sweat. You will yearn for a shower, and all the other things you yearn for. Sociological integrity requires more than that. It requires integrity of service to society, the integrity of responding to the moral issue of the time in which you live. There is now a vehicle available for the globe to respond. Don't you see what we have invented, what God wrenched out of us? A vehicle that everyone can respond to.

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What does The ICA believe? The ICA believes that society is imbalanced. There's this "humongous" economic dynamic. There is this weak-livered lizard of a political process, and then there is the meaninglessness of all culture. It is imbalanced. The ICA is about changing that imbalance from the local level so that every person may participate in the change.

The founding myth of The ICA has to do with the 20th Century's birth of consciousness about what the moral issue is. Which is gap in the creativity that is released to be invested in creating history - the gap between the 85 and 15 percent.

Then I asked myself about The Order:Ecumenical. The action of the Order:Ecumenical is spirit remotivation. That is our primary 'do' in that context. The expectation of The O:E is covenantal integrity. If we tried just being theologically clear and/or socially engaged, The O:E will raise the question of your profound commitment to history - your commitment beyond your accomplishments and your certitude, your commitment to Being itself. It will raise the question of commitment to your own call as a unique person in history and your commitment to invent, and invent again whatever the institutions are that are necessary to see to it this world is changed. Covenantal integrity. We have also talked about it as profound corporateness.

What does The Order believe? I believe The Order believes in profound commitment. We had an Ethical Studies I course in our region. You know what we are telling people profound commitment is? I mean, standing up in public telling people? We are telling people that profound commitment is first of all raw decision, not clarity or consensus. Raw decision. The second thing we are telling people is profound commitment is creating the meaning of that decision. Periodically during the last year I experienced myself as a beggar with my hands out walking around looking for someone to create meaning of my decision to be this community. It became clear to me that each of us is and as a whole body are responsible for creating the meaning for the decision we have made in every situation. The meaning is not going to float in from some other place. It is created out of the pain, blood, sweat and tears of your own life and our life as a community.

The third thing we are saying profound commitment is is social blessing. After I had been in Washington for a few weeks, my colleagues gave me a copy of the Republican Study Committee report. The Committee is not a committee of the Republican Party. It is a lobby group and a private organization. The report is huge, even includes quotes from Kazantzakis. The more I read it the more excited I got because it was the New Testament. It's almost like society's been beating us up the last several years to decide who we are so they can bless us. Because unless society can bless us we can't demand that society be who it is. Across the globe we're all having the same struggle. The social recognition of your profound commitment is the third part of profound commitment.

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Remember when Verdell Trice talked about 5th City? He said, "If I hadn't made the statement I was going to be here, I would not have made it. Don't be afraid to make a commitment." I felt like a fist went into my face. Somebody came up to me after that and said, "Did you put him up to that?" I said, "No, my stomach dropped out just like yours did with that statement."

The founding myth of The Order is related to the birth of 20th Century pluriform society. What is it that brought each of us to be this phenomenal body. Personally, it is no longer the experience of an identity crisis. It is the new kind of power of the forms and structures we have invented to deliver the goods of the New Social Vehicle and New Religious Mode for our time. There's a sister at the University of the West Indies in Trinidad. We stay there sometimes. The first time we arrived, she picked us up at the airport. We never had met the sister before. She was a gracious hostess and took us all around Trinidad. We had fine food, visited many people. We even met the archbishop. Everybody was very hospitable. I kept saying why are they so gracious. We have not even done anything yet. We just came from the airport. In every case people were trying to get it communicated to us our crucial role in enabling those who are vocated to move into the new imagery that's required.

A lot of people visit the Washington House. Some of them are total surprises. One day I answered the door and found a man and a woman standing there. She had been in Sri Lanka for 10 years working in villages where she had heard about us. She brought a man from the Stanford Research Institute with her. We sat down and I said, "What would you like to talk about? (Stanford Research Institute - wait until he finds out I'm from Glenview High School in Cleveland.) He said, "I just want to look around at your space." Fortunately, my grandmother had made me a neurotic about public space, so our space was spotless.

He stopped at the profound humanness chart. "Where did this come from?" "Oh, it came out of our work."

Then he went to the Other World chart. "Where did this come from?" "Oh, it came out of the same place." Daily office, the reredos, on and on.

"What's your time design?"

All these questions. I was really not sure what was happening - whether he was actually a news reporter or what. And I said, "Why are you so interested in this?"

He said, "Because most of this country doesn't know it, but for the last five years there has been a team of people, top professionals and thinkers from across the country sitting in a think tank in the Stanford Research Institute because we are beyond the old forms. Your group has worked on half of what our agenda is." He wanted a profound humanness chart to take back.

All last year people phoned asking if they could do a site visit to the Washington House. There are many groups who are starting corporate living experiments. Ten percent of the residential style of Washington D.C. is now corporate living. Economics is forcing new corporateness on society. But

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that is not the only reason. When you talk to people they are interested in community. I find that riveting. All year long I kept getting rocked by other people's grasp of who we are and the necessity of our being in history, with their interest in the forms we have in fact created or have been created through us.

Now, I want to read one paragraph from some years ago that I found in the archives. A colleague said when it was first read that he was in absolute shock. This is the paragraph:

Since religious orders have typically arisen in chaotic periods in which there was a struggle to awaken those who care, it is not surprising in our time of radical transition and renewal movements to see the creation of a new religious order. Clearly the demand to promote and style the spirit deeps of humanity so the Mystery of Being can be manifest broadly in society and the hidden power of Being which grants humanity courage to rise, courage to change and courage to create, can be loosed is the demand of the hour.

Some people are going to be really upset when they find out we are serious about the New Social Vehicle, the New Religious Mode and the two million villages. We are going to need each other a lot more than we ever thought. We will never carry it through without a body of people upon whose shoulders it sits.

I went in to the Order Formation Lab one day. They were having a real struggle. I always experience things in a weird way. I was excited by all the problems they were having, all the ambiguities, all the confusion, all the chaos, all the pain and all the agony. I said "Wow, only the religious have that experience, no one else." They are not yet having conversations in General Motors about the Dark Night, but they could. God is not a category that was invented by The Ecumenical Institute. Life is the way it is.

Now, this second turn we've been talking about. The first turn was the turn to the world and it is done. The second turn is a turn in the world (you couldn't turn to the world again; once you turn to it, you're there). The second turn is in the midst of the turn already made, not an alternative. It is a turn, I believe to formation. We are in position to facilitate the emergence of the New Social Vehicle across the globe; and in some regions and some nations, we are in position to engage those who care in effective ways to accelerate its emergence.

For instance, the IERD Global Advisory Board - I had the honor and the breathless experience of going with Sir James Lindsay on visits in Washington, New York and Atlanta. We had this long conversation about how we should ask Robert McNamara to serve on the Global Advisory Board. How should we try to ask the question? We worked it out and decided we had enough nerve to say "Mr. McNamara, might you possibly consider one day being on our Global Advisory Board? You could send us a letter at a later time." It was really an open question. One of the team started telling the story, then Sir James continued. Before we can get through the story, Mr. McNamara interrupts and says, "What do you want me to do?"

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Mr. McNamara said, "Sure, I would be delighted. Meetings like this one half hour, or forty-five minutes are no problem. I can't come to a lot of big conferences, but we can talk on the phone, communicate, and meet whenever we need to."

This second turn is about the strategies of formation, declaration and manifestation. We are now living in what we talked about several years ago as the Third Campaign. It is now swirling and the Order is at the center of the swirl. Our burden is to stand at the center of it and to see to it that those who care across the globe get practical ways to build the new earth. There is only one other major contradiction to the new world, that is the new covenant. The new world is obviously not solving everybody's problems, it is not some utopian ideal. The world is blocked at the point of the new covenant out of which it can live as it continues to create perpetually the new religious mode and the new social vehicle. Now, our experimentation in covenant, our pain, our weird stuff, our not-so-weird stuff is very important to the globe's capacity to grasp the new covenant of post-modern civilization.

The spirit demand I experience is struggling again with free obedience to the divine economy. We used to do four lectures on God before we did the Christ lecture. One of the lectures was the attributes of God. We might pull that out and look at it again. The only operating consensus about God in the 20th Century is that it is the self. So it is important to know not only how the question of God gets raised but who is raising the question.

As I listen to myself talk sometimes at our collegium table or in meetings, I hear profound struggle with idolatry over what we have created. Our July Prep Task Force sat in on the Academy's course in Ecumenics and were rocked as they went through the categories of nationalism, liberal humanism. We were rocked. The question was raised again - now what is it we stand before, finally? Our struggle. I was thinking of Kazantzakis and his work on the last temptation. That is a great book - terrifying to read, ~~you can't~~ ^{you can't} sleep several nights after you read it. All those new images coming into the brain. The great temptation - the last temptation is something like believing that you didn't go through with it. Believing that your experience of brokenness, despair, uncertainty, is not the going through with it. As I think about the future, of our life, and mission, I want to remind us that our activity of perpetual repentance in our own life is that which alone brings integrity to our capacity to claim repentance of somebody else's life. The world has got to change. We all have to change. The sign of the capacity of the pluriform body to change is in fact the sign that the world needs at this moment of history.