

CREATING A FUTURE TOGETHER: HOW WILL WE BE PROPHETIC?

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Sister Mary Sujita, SND

Part 2

Given our present context of Religious Life and the urgencies of our time, we want to start this journey anew, letting go of expectations about what will emerge, not knowing the outcome, and allowing the Spirit to lead us to a new way of living Religious Life. Let's be open to the surprises of the Spirit who may very well lead the CRA on ways we have not known before. The prophetic dimension of CRA is as much about the *how*, as about the *what*, of your mission here. Perhaps this is a good time to look at the current CRA involvements through the wisdom of the Beatitudes and the lens of the "Mission Statement of Jesus" (Lk 4:16-18). It is with a deep sense of joy and gratitude for all the blessings that we have received and shared in our life and ministries as congregations that we search together for the possibilities of creating a prophetic future together. Trusting in God's faithful love we move forward in faith. "Where there is creative response, there is life and openness to the new kinds of prophecy." (José Cristo Rey García Paredes).

How shall we be prophetic together?

In Jesus, the prophetic Son of God, we recognize the true prophet as the one who intimately knows the heart of God and is able to read the signs of the times, discerning the voice of God in those signs. The true prophet is one who is able to hear the cry of the poor and be moved to action; one who knows and accepts the price that one must pay for being God's prophet. (Cf. Cassian J Yuhaus) No prophet can be too safe, too cautious, too secure, too sure, too much in control! No wonder all the prophets of old wanted to run away from their call! Prophets never had a comfortable life. They had to speak up and pay a high price for it. It is only in living one's discipleship with passion that she/he becomes God's prophet. Jose Pagala says, that we become prophetic when, "We begin to encounter Jesus, when we begin to trust God as he did, when we believe in love as he did, when we come to suffering people as he did, when we defend life as he did, when we look at people as he did, when we confront life and death with hope as he did, when we pass on the contagion of the Good News as he did." Yes, by wanting to risk a more prophetic future, I think the CRA is asking God for trouble! Nevertheless, we are called to be a prophetic presence that bears witness to God by word and action, a presence that speaks of justice and compassion, a presence that disturbs and transforms.

During the last two decades, there has been a concerted effort among religious across the world to address the implications of our call to be mystics and prophets, contemplatives in action. More than ever before, the issues of Justice, Peace and Integrity of Creation (JPIC) have become focal points of consideration in our Chapters, Congregational plans and programmes. Without doubt, most congregations have come up with impressive General and Provincial Chapter Statements and plans. However, one wonders how far all this has led to a definite paradigm shift in our way of being Religious today. The truth is that most of us as Religious have found convenient, soothing definitions for counter-cultural and prophetic living even as we become more assimilated into the dominant culture of individualism and consumerism. I see what often happens; it happens to us as Notre Dame Sisters also. We start to answer a need, and as we progress, we become more institutional. Each institution has its own needs and demands for efficiency and success which often take over the prophetic element of the ministry. We somehow desensitize ourselves from that inner "prophetic sting" of our discipleship so that we can live a comfortable, successful, good life!

The Jesus Movement was, and will always be, prophetic and revolutionary. Today the Spirit leads us to ask ourselves, in what concrete ways are we prophets and mystics in our lifestyle, spirituality, community and ministry?

We Religious are not meant to be builders and maintainers of institutions but pioneers and border crossers, prophets of alternative ways of creating communities and communion among all people. I understand that many Australian Religious Institutes have transferred their traditional ministries of Education, Health, Aged Care, Social Services – to newly established Public Juridic Persons (PJPs). This is already a welcome sign of hope. The challenge would be to ensure that you keep up what I call a Beatitudinal spirit when you work as a Public Juridical Person, always focussing on the mission and not becoming trapped in the bureaucratic framework and survival needs. That is a question I leave you to discuss, as it needs to be done in your Australian context.

Buzz Session: Looking back at your life during the past 10-15 years, what was a specific personal experience of “prophetic risk taking”? (Prophecy in small things!)

I was drawn to the theme of this Assembly, especially the expression “Creating a Future TOGETHER.” I think that expression contains prophetic fire and possibilities! While accepting the reality of diminishment, we also see the need to nurture our joyful and vibrant spirit. It must be very challenging for Religious in Australia at present as many of you are withdrawing from some of your traditional, and even successful ministries and deciding on what you choose to do together as CRA. You no longer want to worry about power, roles, influence and not even impact, but you want to be very focussed on your authentic witness of life and a new way of being Religious. God is busy making something new for us Religious everywhere in the world. Are we there with God’s new plans for us? In this globalized world, how can our communities become prophetic signs of an alternate way of living and witnessing, and being fruitful?

CRA members, with all your wealth of charisms, spiritualities, ministry experiences, collective wisdom of years and commitment to your prophetic vocation, are expected to be experts in reading the signs of the times and evaluating what is oppressive and unjust. You are called to provide “shock therapy” for the economic systems, the ecological and sociological concerns, the political structures, as well as for ecclesial institutions. I believe that being knit “together” as congregations, with “one heart and mind” (Acts), in partnership with all people of good will for the creation of a more just and peaceful world, is the way forward for Religious life. The future is drawing us toward communal commitment, beyond congregational, cultural and geographical borders.

We Religious can find great encouragement and support in our mission today in the person and message of Pope Francis. Like a true prophet, he has been consistent in announcing the Good News and denouncing the bad news through his witness of life and his teaching. Unlike the prophets of doom, he continues to be a prophet of joy and hope and invites us to be the same. The focus areas of his teachings can very well give us a clear direction to follow in our evolving prophetic mission. He often speaks about our responsibility to evangelize in a new way by becoming the compassion and mercy of God and not through dogmas and rules. He calls us to LIVE our faith and witness to Jesus in real terms. He himself is daring in his freedom to ask the hard questions and discuss issues that we have always taken for granted. Pope Francis has brought the care of the environment as integral to our faith life. His teachings are filled with possibilities for a prophetic Religious life.

Our globalized, post-modern world with all its blessings also has created many peripheries where millions struggle for the basic necessities of life, fundamental human rights and dignity, integral liberation, meaning in life, and peaceful co-existence. Today, religious are challenged to practice Gospel compassion, beyond acts of charity, to a justice-seeking compassion that goes to the root causes of widespread poverty, exploitation,

dehumanization and destruction of the environment. This is the kind of faith in prophetic action to which we Religious are called anew today.

Buzz session: Have you encountered a prophetic person? Why do you call her or him ‘prophetic’?

What are the Margins that Confront us today?

I hope Pope Francis' clarion call, "Go to the poor, go to the peripheries," has made us as Religious restless enough to move in new directions. Pope Francis says that, "The Church is called to come out of herself and to go to the peripheries not only in the geographic sense but also the existential peripheries: those of the mystery of sin, of pain, of injustice, of ignorance, of doing without religion, of thought and of all misery." He has consistently called us to work for the creation of an inclusive world without margins and unjust peripheries. There is a sense of urgency in his call as he invites us to reimage Religious Life and mission in a radical way, and find our true identity on the peripheries.

Being in an affluent country like Australia, you can easily avoid the peripheries by convincing yourself that we do not have 'the poor' like in India and in other developing or under developed countries. There are no nations in the world without the peripheries that need our presence and action. But we need the eyes of the heart to see the real poor and hear their cry for help. Pope Francis reminds us that besides the geographical peripheries there are also those *existential* peripheries that need our presence: men and women who have lost all hope, families in difficulty, abandoned children, young people without a future, the elderly, sick and abandoned, those who are rich in the world's goods but impoverished within, men and women looking for a purpose in life, thirsting for the divine... (Pope Francis to All Consecrated People, Nov.2014)

As Religious we are challenged to understand the various peripheries and to know where they are. Who are these peripheralized persons? Who are the poor? We have become experts in defining the poor in ways that does not touch our comfort zones. For some of us, the poor are those emaciated, miserable humans who appear on our TV screens occasionally and make our stomach churn with repugnance and pity. We feel urged to say a little prayer for them and may be even dole out a little donation and then we return to our peaceful world. It is hard to speak about them or write without resorting to stereotypes and statistics. We might whisper a prayer for those unfortunate ones and then we move on with life as usual. We can live in our convents, our houses without having to see, touch, smell or feel the poverty of the poor, and continue doing many good works! The poor are removed from our own lives, they have become too familiar, we access them from comfort, and without having to feel the heat and violence that is the womb of their genesis. Turn over the page, click to another channel, we become immune.

So, who are the poor? We do not mean the victims of nature's calamities, of earthquake, tsunami, famine and flood. From time to time we witness the hardness of Mother Nature in dealing with her children, and on such occasions there is a call for our help and we respond. Then, we speak not merely of hapless individuals, those who have "failed to make it", the homeless and destitute, those on the streets. Really, who are the poor? We speak of whole communities of people, ethnic communities of people in their thousands, we speak about the landless, asset-less, job-less, voice-less millions whose poverty is compounded by their very numbers, and by a negative collective identity given to them by society. We go beyond economics, because "poor" is also a social identity. There are whole classes and communities of peoples stigmatized by some social identity, given a pejorative name, be it Aborigines, tribals, blacks, Dalits (the ex-untouchables of India), people with a different sexual orientation than ours, or whatever. Such a brand stigma then leads to discrimination and social exclusion, which is, in turn, justified by some other worldview ideology. Then comes political subordination, because it is believed that such an inferior class is not capable

of making decisions for itself. However, the bottom line is economic, where others decide for them the size of their piece of the cake. The outcome is a people marginalized, excluded, and very often brutalized. The poor are not just those people who have been "left behind" for whatever reason, but those who are victims of injustice of our economic and social systems.

Buzz session: When you hear the expression "poor and marginalized", who are the people that come before your eyes? Why do you call them marginalized?

We speak of the poor in their anonymity. Gustavo Gutiérrez noted that he attended the funeral of Bishop Romero, during which forty persons were killed, but we do not know their names because they were "the poor". We know the names of priests and religious who were killed, but "the poor" are anonymous, nameless. We speak of the poor particularly as victims of human greed and hatred. Impoverishment is not something that just happens; it is a human creation. More commonly it is caused by invisible social mechanisms that we have created. We have seen the multiple colonial enterprises which flourished in the name of "spreading civilization". We see indigenous peoples who have lost the survival base of their natural resources in the name of "development of the country" become remnants living on the fringes.

We have structural adjustment programs that have turned fertile lands to desert; we have "intellectual property rights" that put medicines beyond the reach of people who need them. We have communities caught in a debt trap in which they have no hope. Each injustice carries its own deceit, its own seeds of violence. Each has its coherently-articulated justification. This justification often comes in the form of a world-view, an ideology. (Cf. Herbert, Tony SJ, "Disturbing the Dust", forth coming publication.)

As we look at our prophetic response to poverty and marginalization from the above perspective, it is very clear that for us who are religious, there is an extra dimension: we are not just following Jesus, the Good News to the Poor, but we are to be with him in his poverty and his helplessness, his Gethsemane, his Calvary! That means we have the same choices to make as he had. His temptations to power, success, and prestige, are the same temptations of the church and of Religious today. They are our temptations, individually, but even more, collectively and institutionally. Yes, it comes back to embracing those on the margins in their poverty, just as he embraced us in our poverty. This is all very easy to say, but how do we deal with it in a credible and visible way?

Buzz session: What are your deeper feelings as you hear more about the poor? Can you identify with the feelings of unsuccessful fishermen, Peter and his companions, as explained in Luke 5?

Solidarity on the Margins

Henry Nouwen said: "Those who are marginal in the world are central in the Church, and that is how it is supposed to be!" We often talk about solidarity in a world of exclusion. Solidarity is not an option for the followers of Jesus; it is a Gospel imperative, even more so, for those who profess to follow him through a consecrated life. Pope Francis reminds us: "As Consecrated men and women do not distance yourselves from people and enjoy all comforts; no, approach and understand the lives of Christians and non-Christians, the sufferings, the problems, the many things you only understand if a consecrated man and a consecrated women become close to others. Solidarity means the willingness to regard injustices committed against another as no less serious than an injustice against oneself. Pope Francis repeatedly urges us to live our solidarity by going to the existential peripheries of our modern world.. He invites us for a shift in the center of gravity of our apostolic works as religious congregations. He challenges the whole Church to get out of ourselves and go

toward the periphery and to protect ourselves from becoming self-absorbed! But do we recognize the real peripheries and the most neglected and peripheralized people around us?

How will solidarity look in your actual lived reality? To what style of life will it direct you? What specific actions will it demand of you? What will it mean to be in solidarity with those on the margins, those most in need in our society? On this journey, we become friends and companions with people on actual terms: where and how we live, what we own and have, what we do, and with whom we are identified. How we carry out our ministries and our life in their totality must become a clear expression of our mystical and prophetic response to the plan of God for a new humanity. Consecrated life will always mean living on the edge and participating in the struggles, the insecurities, of the peripheries. It may be that we could ask those on the different peripheries to give us an honest evaluation of our Religious life as they see it and experience it!

Buzz session: As a Religious what has been your personal experience of living solidarity with the marginalized of your society?

Being at the side of the marginalized and wounded in today's world may take us where we might not want to go. Therefore, our question is beyond immersion experiences and periodic involvements on the peripheries. How can we say to those on the margins that we really love you and we feel your pain; that we are with you in your struggle for dignity and human rights? It is from this level of identification with the marginalized that we get energy to give a Christ-like response to the present situation. Once we embark on this journey, many new possibilities emerge before us. Let me mention just a few.

Where is the Spirit leading the CRA?

I am aware of the several new initiatives of the CRA in responding to the needs of your peripheries here in Australia, especially your ministries related to the issues of Human Trafficking, Migrants and asylum seekers, Indigenous people, Sexual abuse, Advocacy, and so on. It is with much appreciation for what you already are doing that I offer here some additional possibilities for your consideration.

1. Promote alternative “counter—culture” and prophetic communities:

“Jesus teaches us clearly that God calls us, not just as individuals, but as a community...how we relate to each other is part of how we relate to God.” (cf. Ronald Rolheiser) In an article published by Mark Clarke, M.S, Community Works Inc. he suggests that the future of religious life will be in the pioneering communities. The time has come for us to envision and embrace small communities of committed women of vision who find creative ways of being challenging witnesses of a new way of being, a new way of living and relating to one another. These communities will be intergenerational, intercongregational, intercultural and might even be international, sharing the charism and spirituality of institutes. These small communities, as far as possible, will they live among marginalized, sharing their struggles and hopes. These communities will be very involved with the care and protection of the environment. Such a community will draw its strength from the sharing of the Word of God, living an incarnational spirituality, contemplation and deep faith-sharing and from the wisdom and love of the poor and suffering people among whom they live and minister. The members of these communities will work beyond borders through networking, collaboration, partnership, shared mission and passionate commitment to the Good News of Jesus, to their respective congregational charisms and their shared vision. These communities will use the technological developments in society for sharing the Good News effectively. (cf. Envisioning the Future of Religious Life as a Pioneer Community, page 3)

In India, we also have the Ashram-style of communities. These are open not only to Religious membership but also to lay people who share in a common vision and commitment

to the mission of Jesus. There are other "insertion" communities that form a legal entity and follow a very simple life style, dependent on people's support rather than support from government or other external sources. What would it mean for our communities to embrace the periphery? Forming inter-congregational "insertion communities", especially on the peripheries, could open doors to many new prophetic ministries. What would be the possibilities and implications for CRA if you invited a group of Religious to venture into this new way of being together as prophetic communities on the peripheries? Within the Church there are similar examples of communities like the Cana community in Sydney, living alternate lifestyles that can show us the way forward.

2. Choice of ministry:

In the opening words of *Gaudium et Spes*, Vatican II challenges us to be immersed in the realities of our world: "The joys and hopes, the grief and anguish of the people of our time, especially of those who are poor or afflicted, are the joys and hopes, the grief and anguish of the followers of Christ as well." Yes, ministry today means facing the harsh, rapidly changing realities of our times with the people of God: the reality of massive migration of peoples; poverty, abuse of human rights; war, terrorism, conflict and corruption in governments; abuse of creation and ecological degradation; negative effects of globalization; lack of values in society; injustices in the Church, to name a few. Given these disturbing signs of the times and our present congregational realities, what ministry possibilities are emerging before us? Where is the Spirit leading us?

I have already mentioned two great examples of persons who chose prophetic ministries: St. Mary MacKillop and the Cana Community. In India, we have many examples, the one most known being the choice made by Mother Teresa of Calcutta, the saint of the peripheries. I would also like to remember Sister Valsa John, a Religious of Jesus and Mary, who dedicated fifteen years of her life to the cause of the Santal tribals of Jharkhand in North India. She led a people's resistance movement against displacement of the tribals by the PANEM Coal Mines, Ltd. She stood by the tribals and led them in their prolonged struggles against the human right violations committed against them by the mining company. She finally paid for her prophetic stance with her life. However, her prophetic life did not end with her murder; the people continued the struggle in her spirit until they succeeded to a large extent.

In the name of development and progress, multinational corporations gain unimaginable wealth and power across the globe through manipulative markets, predatory alliances, outsourcing of labour, etc. I am aware of the fact that, here in Australia, some are opposing Adani, the Indian multinational conglomerate seeking to build the world's largest new coal mine in central Queensland's Galilee Basin. I understand that people who are very committed to justice, protection of the environment, human rights, and concern for the marginalized are resisting the government's plan for this kind of development and progress. What more can CRA do strengthen partnership with NGOs and movements for human rights, justice and protection of the environment in this country and beyond?

3. The Ecological crisis:

One crucial problem of the world today is the ecological crisis. In *Laudato Si'*, Pope Francis tells us that, "Living our vocation to be protectors of God's handiwork is essential to a life of virtue; it is not an optional or a secondary aspect of our Christian experience." You already have a number of Religious Institutes that are actively engaged in Ecological ministries, e.g., "Earth Song." In India, a Jesuit priest, along with students from the schools, took a small step to protect the environment and called it *Tarumitra* (Friends of the Trees). That little step has become a huge movement for environmental protection in India and in many other countries. I am sure that CRA could find innovative ways to motivate and even begin a movement among the students/youth/people here in Australia who are willing to sacrifice and save Mother Earth in ways they had not imagined before.

On another note, I feel that we Religious need to examine and reassess our underlying attitudes and beliefs about the earth and its resources as well as our spiritual and physical responsibilities towards the planet. As Religious, you need to take time to ask yourselves: What is happening to the Australian environment? Why is it happening? Who are affected by it, and who is responsible for it? What is your role in this reality? What are some practical steps that CRA can initiate to challenge yourselves to a radical ecological conversion and to live a new eco-spirituality so that, together, we create a new eco-culture that will impact the whole society? Since our environmental concerns and ecological awareness are made visible in our community and personal lifestyles, it is important to challenge our comfortable “first world lifestyle” regardless of where we Religious live. What a great prophetic stand against consumerism it would be if all of us as Religious embraced a spirituality of sufficiency and lived a lifestyle that says, “enough is enough!”

4. Dialogue and communal Harmony: I have heard it said that the Australian Catholic Church is the most multicultural Catholic Church in the world. The face of Australia is changing as globalisation takes hold and migration from many nations continues to be on the rise. There is an increase in non-Christian groups, and the evolution of a greater multi-faith, multi-cultural Australia. Today, we Religious will have to consciously and with determination cross the boundaries of religion, caste, race, gender, nation, geography, languages, culture, economic and political interests to build human communities marked by justice and peaceful co-existence. The single most important agenda item in contemporary mission theology is interreligious, intercultural dialogue. We are called anew to be prophets of a new world order where all can live in harmony as children of God.

Years ago, the Asian Bishops addressed the urgency of entering into a triple dialogue: dialogue with the poor, with religions, and with cultures. Investing in creating a culture of dialogue is an urgent need for Australia, as this nation is becoming more and more multi-cultural, multi-religious and diverse in so many ways. Dialogue is an area of tremendous prophetic opportunities for consecrated persons in our borderless world, provided we continue to Encounter the Word and have the necessary formation and competence to Engage our world.

Could CRA think of setting up Peace Centers /Dialogue Centers in different parts of Australia where people of various religious and cultural backgrounds, nationalities, socio-economic and professional backgrounds and age-groups, especially young students and educators could learn the art of dialogue and become leaders and promoters of reconciliation, peace negotiations, and universal harmony?

5. Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs): The SDGs of the UN, universally applicable for the whole world, with its focus on poverty eradication and priority Sustainable Development, covering the social, economic and environmental dimensions of development, is a good opportunity to align with CRA vision and mission. More and more, we realize that unjust and unequal power relations are at the root of multidimensional poverty and inequalities, social exclusion and ecological destruction. CRA, focusing on the implementation of even one or two of the SDGs across Australia, can be revolutionary. Your actions, strengthened by the power of prayer, can indeed make a difference.

6. Witnessing--the ministry of contemplative, compassionate presence: As a woman religious from Asia, my experience is that religious persons in Asia are expected to be persons of deep contemplation, renunciation and asceticism. Aging and diminishment invites us to become a visible, credible and transforming presence in our world today when our BE-ing takes over our DO-ing! As we age, we see the need *to BE more and to have less!* Religious have a precious identity as close disciples of Jesus, apart from all the work we do and all the institutions we manage so efficiently! “To be” is not a passive presence but as a

presence that makes a difference, that touches hearts, raises questions and leads to mutual transformation. Spiritual kenosis in aging, suffering and dying is a powerful prophetic witness.

The Gospel, as it is embodied in the consecrated person, carries much more credibility and power than all our dogmas and reasoning. "Religious life ought to promote growth in the Church by way of attraction. The Church must be attractive. Wake up the world! Be witnesses of a different way of doing things, of acting, of living! It is possible to live differently in this world... [R]eligious follow the Lord in a special way, in a prophetic way. It is this witness that I expect of you. Religious should be men and women who are able to wake the world up." (Wake Up the World! Conversation with Pope Francis about Religious Life, trans. by Donald Maldari, S.J.) To evangelize today is a matter of deep spirituality and witness of a joyful life and not just the preaching or teaching of doctrines and Church laws. Gandhi is reported to have said to a group of Christian missionaries: "You talk too much. Look at the rose. It too has a gospel to spread. It does it silently, but effectively and people come to it with joy. Imitate the rose." A presence that is holy and authentic is the key. We are grateful to the many religious here in Australia who do imitate the rose and make a huge difference in this society and in the Church by their presence and action, in spite of the many challenges!

7. Diminishment offers new opportunities for mission: Religious life the world over, is becoming a smaller movement. It is moving from a position of power to a position of vulnerability and becoming more focused in its specific mission. It is moving from a closed system to an open, interdependent and less institutional system. Responding to our call at this time requires that our communities become more intentional, international and intercultural. I am aware of the current trend of a local church to call religious or priests from Asian and African countries to supplement the dwindling number of religious. These Religious come from different cultural backgrounds and they bring with them their spirit of missionary commitment, enthusiasm and experience. However, given the realities of this country, they will need a re-orientation in their life and ministry in this new reality which will help them to truly 'pitch their tent' among the people here. Some specially designed integration programmes, accompaniment for intercultural and international giving, and if needed, updating in theology, etc. are priority areas to be addressed in this new reality. CRA might want to reflect on how it can play an important role in welcoming and preparing Religious who come from other countries to serve in this country. In this way, that they are not caught up in traditional ministries and maintenance of institutions, but are enabled to internalize the vision of a new way of being Religious and become active participants in CRA's efforts for a prophetic Religious life.

8. Nurturing "Temporary Commitment"

I believe that this land of plenty has many wonderful young people who are willing to engage in the prophetic mission of Jesus for a shorter period of time, even though they may not feel called to a life time commitment to Religious Life. From your years of wisdom and experience the members of the CRA could form and mentor another generation of committed persons, to be prophetic witnesses in our modern world. Perhaps CRA could become advocates for such an initiative especially for the Christian youth of this country.

9. Immersion Experiences:

We all speak about living an incarnational spirituality. I believe that Jesus has shown the true meaning and consequences of incarnation, that is essentially 'relational.' Dwelling among the people on the margins as Jesus dwelt among us is an integral part of our discipleship. In order to relate to them as our brothers and sisters, to create and sustain a culture of commitment and sensitivity to the poor and marginalized, and to promote and atmosphere of compassion everywhere, can CRA organize periodic IMMERSION experiences especially

for Religious and others interested committed to ministry on the margins and accompany them with the necessary guidance, theological reflections and Social Analysis?

Conclusion

As I conclude my remarks, I venture to say one more thing: the future of religious life, the age of religious life as we have known it, is over. Perhaps that leaves a lot of pain in us as elderly religious. We see an end to what we valued and cherished, although this realization can bring us justifiable pride for the many wonderful things accomplished so well over many years. One thing remains clear: in giving ourselves to the many peripheries of our present society, as some do and have done, would itself seem like a dying, a giving away of the very thing that religious life is all about, has stood for. On the contrary, we find that this is the very thing that gives new life and brings renewal and a new identity to Religious Life. Death and Resurrection are not just somewhere in the “spiritual realm”, or for our personal lives; they are the very essence of our shared, prophetic life and mission.

As we journey into a new way of being religious in Australia, what do we need to learn, unlearn and re-learn? How can CRA continue to rejuvenate itself? How best can we each respond to the current missionary urgencies and challenges of today? What is the MORE to which the Spirit is leading the CRA? What borders are we called to cross as we look to the future mission of the CRA? This CRA Assembly is the perfect time to see the possible and liberate potential for what seems impossible! St. Francis of Assisi said, let us “Start by doing what is necessary, then what is possible, and suddenly you are doing the impossible.” It all begins with risking the right questions. It all begins with each one of us. There are many frontiers to be crossed, moments of prophetic risks to be taken, moments of reckless generosity to be lived because we recognize the suffering face of God in our peripheralized persons. When we are truly authentic, transparent and honest about who we are and why we are, then we can speak with inner authority and prophetic audacity.

Will this CRA Assembly help each one here to catch a glimpse of the new horizons and possibilities for a more prophetic consecrated life that sees aging and diminishment as new opportunities for ministry on the margins? Let me conclude with the powerful words of St. Catherine of Siena, “If you are who you are meant to be, you will set the world on fire.” Thank you!

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