

## Manna 3 – Tenth Session

### Eucharist and Prophetic Action: Eucharist and Prophecy

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*But should we not have both contemplatives and apostles in the Society,  
both adorers and firebrands,  
since our Lord wants this eucharistic fire to set the world ablaze? . . .  
to make our Lord known, loved, and adored everywhere.*

- March 25, 1865

*Great Retreat of Rome, Saint Peter Julian Eymard*

#### ***Preface***

Saint Peter Julian Eymard was certainly a prophet for his times. In a country (France) and at a time when the Church put such emphasis on one's sinfulness, fear of God, and one's unworthiness, *he* stressed the love of God, especially in the Eucharist. As a Marist living in Lyon, he became friends with the working class and regularly visited the prisons. When he founded the Congregation, he established a ministry of catechesis for the First Communion of workers and the young "rag-pickers" in the slums of Paris. He and his colleagues also attended to their material needs. Father Eymard also called for frequent Holy Communion at a time when the official church leadership frowned upon such a practice. And he taught his followers to base their practice of adoration on the four-ends of the Mass.

Father Eymard clearly saw the social dimension of the Eucharist. It was his vision that the Eucharist could heal the social divisions and ills in society. He hoped to rebuild broken systems and families in a unified vision centered on the Eucharist. The Congregation of the Blessed Sacrament *Rule of Life* echoes that vision:

*Following in the footsteps of Father Eymard, our mission is to respond to the hungers of the human family with the riches of God's love manifested in the Eucharist (3),  
and to be attentive to the cry of the poor (37).*

In his hundreds of letters to the many people he counseled, he often provided comfort in times of sorrow, suggestions for both physical and spiritual healing, and proclaimed the personal love of God for his counselees.

To a Mrs. Lepage Father Eymard urged her to *remain always an apostle of the God of the Eucharist*, reminding her that such is *a mission of fire near those who are cold, of light for those who do not believe, of holiness for the soul of the adorer* (January 24, 1864).

## ***Introduction to the Theme***

During this time together we will consider how the call to prophetic action is nourished through the Eucharist.

Taking John the Baptist as an exemplar of prophetic action in a Christ-centered world, we discover the meaning and the exigencies of prophecy. We are made conscious of the personal cost and consequences of announcing, introducing, and being identified with Jesus Christ.

Like many other prophets, John's recognition of his call to participate in God's mission in the world begins in childhood. Prophetic action on behalf of the reign of God is a *way of being in the world* that requires us to constantly recompose our faith and our self-understanding as followers of Jesus, the lamb of God.

As a Eucharistic people called to prophetic action, evangelization is at the heart of the mission entrusted to us through baptism. Evangelization, understood as the act of living and proclaiming the good news of Jesus Christ, demands nothing less than everything of those who identify themselves as Christians, as those who share the bread of life at the table of the Lord.

Mindful of the prophetic task to both challenge and console the people of God, let us consider in this reflection the ways in which the Eucharist centers us and sustains us as a prophetic community.

## ***Opening Prayer***

All powerful and ever-loving God,  
you are our beginning and our end.  
You are the source of our being.  
You are the fulfillment of our existence.

From the beginning of time,  
you have lifted up prophets to serve you through the actions of their lives.  
You have entrusted women, men and children,  
with the task of being your messengers and heralds throughout the world.

Teaching by word and example  
they have announced peace and reconciliation,  
they have condemned oppression,  
they have defied the idols of death,  
they have envisioned a future full of hope,  
they have consoled the afflicted,  
they have comforted the weary,  
they have fed the hungry,

they have healed the sick, and  
they have proclaimed your wonders throughout the Earth.

Among their number is included the prophet John,  
who bore witness to your Son and our Savior, Jesus Christ.

Preaching a baptism of repentance to all the people of Israel,  
John prepared the way for the coming of the Messiah.

Beholding Jesus as the lamb of God,  
John first gave voice to the sacred words that have become known.

As Jesus embraced his own mission in the world,  
he engaged in prophetic action.

To the poor he proclaimed the good news of salvation,  
to prisoners, freedom,  
and to those in sorrow, joy.

In giving his own life for the life of the world,  
he offered his body and blood  
that all may have life and have it to the fullest.

Gathering all people to himself  
to share in the one eternal banquet,  
Jesus takes away the sin of the world,  
along with all that divides us  
and separates us from you.

Moved by the power of the Holy Spirit,  
we pray that we may be ever-renewed in our commitment  
to be a Eucharistic people  
called to be prophets in the heart of the world. Amen.

*Song:*

- “Behold the Lamb,” by Martin Willet

## ***Work Exercise***

1. What does the term *prophet* mean for you? Identify a contemporary who in your estimation embodies the characteristics of a prophet.
2. There are those who would say that prophecy is an extraordinary gift of the Spirit. Yet as Christians, by virtue of our baptism, we are all called to prophetic action in the ordinary experiences of our day-to-day lives. As our opening prayer reminds us, there are as many ways as there are desires to participate in the prophetic mission of Jesus Christ. Can you think of a recent experience in your own life when you felt called to engage in some kind of prophetic action? In what ways did your celebration of Eucharist sustain you in this activity?
3. As we consider what it means to participate fully in the process of eucharistic evangelization, what do you perceive to be the most difficult challenge(s) you encounter? Do you ever think that more is being asked of you than what you feel you can do or be for others? How do you deal with your thoughts and feelings in this regard? In what ways does your participation in the process of eucharistic evangelization serve as a source of consolation or hope for yourself? What do your responses to these questions suggest to you about the relationship between eucharistic evangelization and prophetic action?

***The work exercise is followed by a small group sharing and a large group sharing.***

## ***Teaching***

1. Prophecy can be understood in many ways. Throughout history, prophets and prophetic voices have been identified in just about every culture and religious tradition. As such, prophecy is not unique to the Jewish and Christian traditions. It does function, however, in particular ways. In the Bible, the writings of the prophets, along with narratives about prophetic action, consistently remind us of how God works in human history, cooperating with women, men and children who respond to the call to give expression to God's intentions for the world.
2. Throughout the Bible, we find numerous examples of prophets, along with their respective experiences of call and response. Consider among others, Samuel (1 Samuel 3), Elijah and Elisha (1 Kings 19), Isaiah (Isaiah 6), Jeremiah (Jeremiah 1:4-10), Jonah (Jonah 1), John the Baptizer (Luke 1:57-80, 3:1-22), and Anna (Luke 2:36-38). Each of these narratives enables us to understand more completely the nature of prophecy and what it means to bear and interpret God's word.
3. One dimension of the prophet's experience that is sometimes overlooked is the mystical dimension. The willingness to open oneself to God completely and without reservation is essential to the prophet's capacity to receive God's word and to act on it. By necessity and by desire, the prophet is a person of prayer, a contemplative in action, one who awakens each morning to listen like a disciple (Isaiah 50:4).
4. The prophet is primarily a prophet in the context of a community. Even when the prophet is rejected, there still is an interaction between the prophet and those who repudiate the prophet. Inasmuch as prophets address themselves to issues and concerns that focus as much on the present as the future, they often unsettle the privileged and the powerful whom they encounter by calling people to accountability on God's terms rather than their own.

At the same time, prophets take people overcome by suffering and sorrow by surprise, offering words of comfort and consolation that encourage those who live with broken bodies and broken hearts. In some cases, the prophet's message is one of doom and disaster. In other cases, it is a message of hope and promise. In every case, it is a reflection of what God seeks to communicate in ways that allow us to hear, see, and experience the measure of his justice and mercy.

5. Prophetic action takes the form of direct communication (e.g., proclamation, condemnation) as well as the form of indirect communication (e.g., symbolic actions). In fact, as we all know, actions often do speak louder than words. Nowhere else is this made more evident than in the breaking of the bread and in the sharing of a cup of wine.

6. Convinced as we are that Eucharist sustains us in our efforts to respond to the call of the Spirit that leads to engage in prophetic action, it is important for us to ponder, in the words of the prophet Micah (Micah 6:8), what it means for us as a eucharistic people to act justly, to love tenderly, and to walk humbly with our God. We can never allow ourselves to cease from reflecting on the coherence between what we say we are committed to and the actual words and actions of our daily lives. In our celebration of Eucharist as well as in our adoration of the Blessed Sacrament, we center ourselves in God experientially. These encounters provide us with the opportunity to examine whether or not our prophetic action is genuine or sufficient, whether or not we are really attuned to God's word and action in our lives. Like the prophet Jonah, who became angry with God when God showed mercy to the people of Nineveh (Jonah 3-4), we must always be prepared to acknowledge that God's ways are not necessarily our ways.

*Resource helps for this teaching:*

- *The Prophetic Imagination*, by Walter Bruggemann. Fortress Press, Philadelphia, 1984.

## ***Closing Prayer***

*If in the presence of the Blessed Sacrament, exposition is made during the opening hymn. When the hymn is concluded, the assembly kneels in silence for several minutes. During this silence, the community welcomes the presence of the Risen LORD before them in the Blessed Sacrament and within them as the LORD'S own body*

### ***Opening Song:***

- “My God and My All,” by Rufino Zaragoza, OFM or
- “You Are Near,” by Dan Schutte

### ***First Reading: Isaiah 55:1-9***

### ***Period of Silence:***

### ***Second Reading: John 1:19-24***

### ***Period of Silence:***

### ***Intercessory Prayer:***

*If in the presence of the Blessed Sacrament, incensing of the Blessed Sacrament and the assembled community occurs after the prayers. Consider using the ritual books for Holy Communion and Worship of the Eucharistic Mystery Outside of Mass (2024) that provides this ritual texts of prayer, praise, The Lord's Prayer, etc.*

### ***Incensing of the Blessed Sacrament and the assembled community: optional***

### ***Benediction: optional***

### ***Reposition: optional***

### ***Closing Prayer:***

O God of the prophets,  
in every age you raise up women, men, and children  
to be witnesses to your truth and goodness.

As we seek to walk humbly in the paths  
that you have prepared for us,  
give us the courage and compassion  
to act justly and to love tenderly.  
Taking Jesus as the model for our lives,

we desire to imitate him, to follow him  
and to announce the good news of salvation.

As Jesus offered the bread of his body for the life of the world,  
so, we, too, place ourselves at your service.

Conscious of the call we received through baptism,  
we pray that we may be found worthy of your grace  
and that the words and actions of our lives  
will be faithful expressions of your love and mercy.

Inspired by the Holy Spirit,  
we pray that we may continue to grow in our understanding  
of what it means to be a eucharistic people,  
committed to living lives of prayer and prophetic action.

We make this prayer with love and gratitude,  
for all the blessings and challenges we have received.

Amen.

*Closing Song:* “Sing a New Church,” Dolores Dufner, OSB or  
“Though the Mountains May Fall,” Bob Dufford, SJ

*Dismissal with some sign of peace:*



