



Can Religious life be prophetic?

American Father Michael Crosby OFM Cap was in Australia recently as the guest of the [Ursuline Sisters](#) to share with them his contemporary understanding of their founder, Angela Merici. While in the country, he spoke publicly in Sydney, Canberra, Toowoomba and Maroochydore.

Fr Crosby is a member of the Midwest Province of the Capuchin Franciscans. He lives fraternally with others who serve the poor in Milwaukee's downtown area.

Holding a Masters in Economics and a PhD in Theology, his ministry is twofold. Most of his time is spent writing and speaking about biblical spirituality geared to the "first world" society and the future of religious life. The remainder of his time is spent in the corporate responsibility movement, advising investors concerned about using their monies to promote social change.

While in Sydney, he presented a day workshop to the Leaders of Religious Congregations in New South Wales, entitled *Prophetic witness in our world today*.

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The future not only for Religious but for all God's people rests in a deeper, mystical understanding of the Trinitarian relationship so that the Kingdom of God may be on earth as it is in heaven, according to Fr Crosby.

Vatican II was a call for everyone to live the gospel - the kingdom of God - but Jesus was clear that the kingdom was not of this world.

In proclaiming the good news, neither the proclamation nor the good news itself can be based on the patterns of this world. Instead, Fr Crosby contends, we need to come to a deeper notion of what the kingdom is. Is it the reign or the rule of God? Could it be the vision or the plan of God? He asserts that it is the very life and energy of God - and that it has been revealed through the gospel as Trinitarian.

In articulating a vision for religious life that is said to be honest, challenging and hopeful, Fr Crosby says that Religious need to become mystics and that they need to aware of the danger of individualism in community life.

He encourages them to revisit to Isaiah 6 - the paradigm of the mystical prophetic call.

"We have to become mystics; we have to return to the contemplative, mystical grounding to understand who God is today ...

"We have to re-appropriate God in ways that will help

us ground our mystical lives in the Holy Trinity, because in the Holy Trinity, you get three persons that all are absolutely equal in their relationships in the way they share their common life.

"That model of trinity and trinitarian relations must define our subsequent viewpoint of critique of our Church and of our world.

"This involves justice, which involves right relations among persons and resources."

Fr Crosby gave the example of patriarchal clericalism as not being trinitarian as it did not reflect equal relations among the members of the community, made male and female in the divine image.

He says the Religious need to go beyond saying that something was unjust.

"We have to begin saying out of our contemplative experience that this is ungodly; this is untrinitarian ... this is sinful.

"We ourselves have to be converted to God because the God of empire, of clericalism, is one we have to stop believing in even though we continue to live in these institutions... We have to be grounded somewhere else."

He suggests, too, that Religious need to address individualism within communities.

Vatican II, in its universal call to holiness, extended the apostolic nature of vocation to all.

"Those who are interested in religious life today are looking to us not for apostolic options - because these people are already deeply involved in ministry ... and prayer - but they want the support system of a community.

"We have to address, especially in the United States, that in our assimilation, we have become highly individualistic.

"We have to be communitarian. We have to witness to communitarian ... we have to show that religious life is prophetic, not that this or that person is prophetic."

Fr Crosby is a prolific author with 16 books to his name. One of them is *Can Religious Life be Prophetic?* (2005) More details about Fr Crosby and his work can be found on [his website](#).





*At the New South Wales seminar were (above, left)
Maureen Heffernan RSC, Laureen Dixon RSC and
Sarita Kuriacose SSpS
and (above, right) Fr Michael Crosby speaks with one
of the participants.*

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