

Prophets of Unity

This week, Australia bid farewell to an extraordinary Prophet of Unity - Lowitja O'Donoghue. In a heartfelt tribute by Father Frank Brennan, he eloquently expressed,

Amidst the complexities and intrigues, Lowitja O'Donoghue remained steadfast, guided by an unwavering instinct that led her towards true north... She united her people when it mattered most, making their aspirations relatable and acceptable to everyday Australians. With unwavering integrity and grace, she selflessly placed others before herself, forging unity through the power of friendship. May she find eternal peace. (Read the full tribute here: <https://johnmenadue.com/a-tribute-to-lowitja-odonoghue>)

In 2015, Lowitja compared the present situation to that of 1967, stating,

There was a different movement back then. Black and white were united, walking together towards the path of referendum. But today, there seems to be an additional element. There are activists who yearn for immediate action, not willing to wait for a hopeful and successful referendum. Initially, I had confidence... but now, unity eludes us, and we must strive to regain it.

Jesus, in his profound final prayer, emphasized the power of unity, saying, "I pray that all may be one" (John 17:21). Love is the essence of God's being, and Jesus exemplified this truth through this prayer, not only for himself and his disciples but also for those who would believe in him. His ultimate desire was for a united world, where humanity would flourish. When Jesus spoke of being "in us," he referred to the spiritual connection with God and the personal bond that arises from it. Jesus not only calls us to have a relationship with him but also to embrace and share that relationship with others.

Christine Valder Paintner invites us to take a profound moment to truly see others as the beloved beings they truly are. In many traditions, this act of seeing others is a way of acknowledging the divine within them and honouring their unique dignity. By practicing this, we can now see those who were once "invisible" to us and recognize them as precious gifts to the world. Furthermore, this practice nurtures a deeper kindness within ourselves, expanding our capacity to appreciate and value others (*Breath Prayer: An Ancient Practice for the Everyday Sacred*, p 165-166).

In her book *Radical Spirit: 12 Ways to Live a Free and Authentic Life*, Joan Chittister beautifully expresses, "We have much to learn from each person we encounter. And in turn, every person we meet requires something from us: a sense of worth, a genuine respect, a sincere admiration, and recognition of their unique contribution to the world." This also aligns with the teachings of Thomas Merton, who emphasised that seeing people as sacred is a reflection of our understanding of God.

As we take time to look at personal spirituality in our Mercy Moments this year let's start with a reminder of the importance of unity, seeing others as divine beings, and valuing the contributions of each individual. In honouring these principles, we can strive for a more united and compassionate world and we can reclaim our personal mission to be prophets of unity.

May we all strive to follow the example set by individuals like Lowitja O'Donoghue and work towards unity, understanding, and respect for one another.



REFLECTION: How does unity and peace lead you to spiritual growth?
In what ways do you experience unity?

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