...A “Prophetic” Approach to Pastoring the Workplace

In investigating a potential role for myself as a “corporate chaplain”, I quickly found out that the chaplain was expected to be there to help the employee adjust to the everyday trials experienced in the workplace and offer counseling and consolation. But as I began to delve into the structure and ethics behind many of these corporations hiring corporate chaplains, I realized that it was the organization itself which was flawed, which in turn impacted the worker; it was not the worker’s intrinsic flaw. So helping a worker “adapt” to or rationalize “false” principles of the dis-functional organization under which they worked would be hypocritical, and doing them a disservice. To me a corporate chaplain should look both upward and downward in the organization and give moral and ethical and spiritual guidance and example to both the employer as well as the employees. This presupposes that a corporate chaplain knows what an ethical corporation/organization looks like—its leaders, its structures, its organization, its processes and its practices, which many might say is totally outside of the realm of expertise of a pastor. However, if a pastor is trained to see (discern) error, and bring out the good in individuals and groups, s/he certainly can discern inherent moral/ethical flaws in an organization. The hard part is not in the discerning, the hard part is in determining what to do about it. To only point out the flaws is useless unless one can offer something better—bringing us back to the point of Schmemann that we must find, and bring to light, the truth underlying the error or heresy. And to hide our heads in the sand, become non-communicative and “clam-up”, or simply terminate our relationships with our community is childish and irresponsible.

We need to help institutions and organizations in which our culture functions to evolve to become a more functional and enlightened entity. These are the potential structures (new wineskin) for the birthing of the new social order (new wine). If we see that today’s governments, economies and societies are corrupt, what can we as worker priests do about them? It seems almost ludicrous that I might think we can change them BUT, there has been a new wave of spiritual thinkers who have given us the vision of what an evolving “secular” organization looks like when the leaders are in a higher stage of consciousness. And of course there is the ultimate “spiritual thinker “of “olden times” who showed us the inner workings of these new structures in his kingdom vision-- Jesus. Let’s look at them below.

Understanding the Succession of Worldviews of Individuals and Societies so as to “Counsel” with Compassion and Grace –“Contexting”
Several authors (Wilber, Palmer, Smith, etc) have devised approaches to measuring a person’s stage of “consciousness” or “worldview”. By this we mean that they “see” or interpret what is going on around them in the world in a certain way, as determined by their inner state of consciousness. This is their “context”. Now, human consciousness evolves in successive stages, often correlated with increase brain size, or complexity. Each stage seems well developed for the context of the world at that time—that is, how the person or collective sees and “deals” with the world is a consequence of the level of consciousness they operate from. And as the human “evolves” so does the potential for their consciousness. The “trigger” for moving to a higher consciousness seems to come in the form of a major life challenge that cannot be solved from their current world view. More complex or evolved perspectives can offer solutions to the problem at hand.

Each stage is characterized by a prevailing world view. As summarized by Laloux, (Locs. 500-1300) in the of early bands of humans (100,000-50,000 yrs ago) their sole effort was to survive the physical elements of the world in a reactive mode. Bands coalesced into tribes and eventually into chiefdoms (15,000 yrs ago) where the first sense of organizational structure is glimpsed. Today, characteristics of this stage which Wilber has termed “tribal” is seen in wolfpacks, street gangs and the mafia. As civilizations grew so did the controlling organizations and the next consciousness stage (amber, 6,000 yrs. ago) is characterized as “conformist”, which is governed by strong hierarchical and rigid social structures around “class” designations. All is either black or white. “You conform to my principles, my morals or you are out (die)” thinking. The leadership style is command and control. They are seen today in armies, large corporations of the industrial revolution, the Roman Church and the public school system.

In the next “Achievement” consciousness stage (orange), effectiveness replaces morals as the yardstick for decision making. There is no absolute right or wrong. The best decision is the one which has the highest “outcome”. Science, innovation and entrepreneurship reign. The goal in life is to get ahead in socially acceptable ways. This stage began during the enlightenment, really emerged as the dominant worldview during the industrial revolution and is still the dominant worldview of business and politics today. While free from religious dogma, its “shadow side” is corporate greed, overconsumption and exploitation, an indication of “innovation gone mad” (Laloux, loc. 829). Its God is wealth. This stage views organizations and the people within them as “machines” which values tasks over relationships and answers to stockholders for profit value.

“With basic needs taken care of, businesses increasingly try to create needs, feeding the illusion that more stuff we don’t need—possessions, fashion, youthful body—will make us happy and whole” (Laloux, loc. 829). It is an entire society based on fabricated needs! “We are pursuing growth for growth’s sake, a condition that is in
medical terminology would simply be called cancer.” (Laloux, loc. 830). So now when success is measured in external wealth and power, it gives the individual a sense of emptiness in their lives, and leads to social inequality and loss of community—loss of relationship with both God AND the other—a total loss of one’s sense of identity. I believe we have a responsibility to help “pastor” both loss of the true God and the loss of the other, rampant in workers in big corporations.

The Post-modern era has restored some hope as consciousness began to shift to a pluralistic view (Green) which values relationships over outcomes and birthed some of the modern liberation movements as the abolition of slavery, women’s rights, and a democratic outlook. What was considered fair and right for the individual was now extended to groups of individuals. Leaders began to feel that they were in service to one another as opposed to being in control over the other. The uneasiness with the hierarchical and bureaucratic organizational structures lead to experimentation with new structures such as the coop and commune, which are extreme forms of egalitarian organizations. There is an effort to push decisions father down the organizational chain, and responsibility is to all stakeholders not only stockholders. Corporations and social structures are to be seen more as a family. However, in practice, there is still a parent-child authority relationship in the concept of family which must be overcome if true identity of the individual is to be found.

The Emerging Consciousness of Integral Leaders-- “Pastoring” Organizations Today

So while we have defined the consciousness behind about 95% of the population today, there is an emerging consciousness which is gaining quite a foothold globally,—the Integral level (teal). This consciousness is informed by inner guidance, not external experts; we listen intuitively to the life that wants to be lived through us; we learn to trust in the abundance of life; we trade judgment for compassion and appreciation; we pursue a life well lived—an authentic selfhood, and the consequence just might be recognition, success, wealth and love, but never the goal; we reprioritize our life to put spiritual practices and connection to the inner Divine as a top priority and act from that inner places of connection and centeredness; the interconnections between all life are seen; trust replaces fear; we strive for wholeness and community; we live from intuition and act from heart centered compassion. Societies now can form groups or organizations that function effectively with “self-management” principles based on peer relationships without the need for either hierarchy or consensus. New organizations have developed a consistent set of practices which invite members/employees to reclaim inner wholeness (meaning); and bring this integrated wholeness into any profession they may enter; and these breakthrough organizations are seen to have a life and sense of direction of their own which is accessed through inner listening and intuition of their true evolutionary purpose. As I write this I feel
that these are many of the “end-time” values of the society that Jesus had envisioned for the kingdom on earth. Perhaps the kingdom of God is rapidly revealing itself to be “at hand”, if we have eyes to see and the courage to walk the new path, breaking from tradition.

Wilber estimates that the percentage of people relating to the world from an “evolutionary” (teal) perspective is still rather small, at around five percent in Western societies. And yet, if we believe there is a direction in evolution, that consciousness is geared to ever more complexity, then the time will come when a large share of society will have shifted to this level of consciousness. But for now, we live in a world where people see mostly through Amber, Orange, and Green lenses, and most of the organizations in which most of the population works is a product of one of these stages. Thus there are many inequities that cause people to suffer everyday—gender and wage inequity, age discrimination, etc. Thus we a pastors must give pastoral counseling in terms of the workplace “context”. And more information as to the characteristics of an “enlightened” organization could be most helpful.

Now we don’t have to earn an MBA in organizational management to do this. We as priests and clergy, need to do only a few things. First and foremost, we must continue to seek an ever-higher stage of consciousness for ourselves—progress toward a joyful union with the Divine and seeing our connectedness to all creation. Second we must truly understand the concept that “an organization cannot evolve beyond its leadership stage of development” (Laloux, loc. 1066). It can’t lift groups to “punch above their weight”. Thus, if we wish to counsel the leadership of a group or of a business, we must focus on uplifting their inner consciousness first. Third, we must have at least a working knowledge of how the organizational “consciousness” effects its employees’ “souls” and how the consciousness of societies can reform organizations,. And fourthly, and perhaps most important, we must see it as our mission to do so. (I can see that many clergy may not agree with me here). However If we clearly discern the cause of society’s pain in the workplace, then should we not make every attempt to reveal the “evil” and rise up to confront the injustice of the workplace? Is this not being a prophetic emergent Church? We are doing this for social issues at large-- the LGBT, immigration, marriage equality and wage inequity. We need to offer them something better for the workplace—a vision of “end-time” governments and economies—civil institutions as well as Religious institutions.

**Structures of “Soul-ful” Organizations- Clues to Detecting and Pastoring Them**

Organizations always reflect the (mean) state of the cultural consciousness. But when the consciousness of a person surpasses that of an organization they work in or belong to they either leave, become reticent or oppressed. Now, there are a few organizations out there today, who are exemplifying “integral” organizational structure, processes and
practices of a higher state of consciousness which is just breaking through on society’s horizon. While this is not the place to examine in detail how an enlightened organizations should be structured, there are a few pieces of information from Laloux that we might find useful pastoring those impacted by the conditions of their workplace or even in structuring or restructuring our own ministries/church as well.

When society switches from external to internal heart-based motivators, the way we buy changes, the way we govern changes, the way we do business changes and even the way we worship changes. People define a “well-lived” life by internal (emotive, intuitive, spiritual) and not outer standards. They seek wholeness beyond ego and value their inner lives as valuable domains of living. (Laloux, loc. 6382).

The organization is looked on as a living soul with a purpose of its own which is constantly outpoured revealing its depths as the need arises. It

1. Exhibits distinct practices of Self-management with no hierarchical structures
2. Foster Wholeness
3. Marches to a Higher Purpose not Mission statement

The integral organizational analogy is that of a “developing organism”—it is a relational model built on connections and feedbacks which constantly grows and develops in complexity in response to the evolving purpose of need. It is principled and heart-based. “Self organization is the natural outcome of any living cell when it enters community”. Its organizational structure is in the form of a relationship diagram—where organizational structures are based on functions and roles (not titles) needed to accomplish a purpose. They are fluid and easily evolve in response to the needs of the client.

Key characteristics of Integral organizations are the following:

1. “Integral” organizations are founded on a number of basic assumptions about people and work: a) all people are of equal human worth (note, he doesn’t say “equal”), b) people are essentially good unless proven otherwise, (here’s our original blessing) and c) there is no single way to manage corporate issues well. (Laloux Loc. 3232-3234).

2. It is important that the leader of the organization and the board be at the integral consciousness level, not necessarily all of the employees, as these structures have processes in place to lift up employees to an integral level. A leader “holds the space for integral practices and structures to occur”. While S/he has no
hierarchical authority she has moral authority—that is “others are keenly aware that his or her presence, words and actions carry particular weight” (Laloux, loc. 5180). They are role models and exhibit behavior associated with self-management, wholeness and purpose.

3. There are several “MUSTS” or practices for an integral organization which must be in place. In essence there are the following:

   a. Three Practices related to **Self-Management** which must be in place:

      i. **The Advice Process**—informing how to make decisions based on consultation with other colleagues which ALL (including the leader/owner) adheres to

      ii. **The Conflict Resolution Mechanism**—determining precise procedures for settling inevitable conflicts which arise, also using the advice practice

      iii. **Peer-evaluation** and salary process- to determine how employees are to be compensated

   b. Four Practices Related to **Wholeness** must be in place

      i. It is grounded in Rules for **Safe Space**

      ii. The **office space is fit for its compassionate purpose**

      iii. There is an “**Onboarding Process**” to welcome and train in the advice and conflict resolution practices to be used

      iv. There is a defined **meeting process** to constantly align with the higher organizational purpose and ethical commitment to society always begun with centering prayer or mindfulness practice

   c. Two Practices Related to the Compassionate Evolutionary **Purpose**

      i. A Defined **Recruitment** Practice- seeking others who resonate with the love-based purpose of the organization, and

      ii. **Empty Chair Practice**- where the chair signifies the deference of all decisions to the overall evolving purpose of the organization, relating how each action serves to further that heart-based purpose.
Thus when society switches from external to internal heart based motivators, the way economies, governments and even churches function changes. As more individuals are seeing the underlying false premise upon which societies are currently structured and embrace for themselves an internal guidance system based on right relationships, entire structure of societies must change as well. The context in which an individual functions begins to change when it no longer serves a purpose for the individual. Perhaps this is what Jesus meant when he urged all to change their metrics of self-worth, and once you do, “letting go” of possessions will come naturally. If you truly believe that you were made perfect, in the image and manifestation of the Creator, just this recognition will free you from the bondage of external attachment. It will be easier to relinquish all, because it has little value to you anymore, -- it becomes separated from your self-worth. We exchange things and status and power for peace of mind, a sense of relief, and less attention to struggle. We live simply, because it feels good. It feels good to access our own inner measure of success and not be tied to current yardsticks of what economies, governments and religions are telling you “living the good life” looks life. The good life doesn’t look like Downton Abbey, but more like a kon tiki adventure. Clear purpose, clear goal, clear roles and rejoicing together with your fellow team members when you “land”.

The Urgent Need to Give People True Meaning and Identity

There is a universal hunger of ordinary people to have their lives recorded. A glance at Facebook or any other social media will tell us that. A recent edition of Frontline aired on Feb 19, 2014 and it focused on the generation of children and young adults who seek and find their identity, their self-worth through the number of “Likes”, that is the thumbs up icon on the internet. In great detail it examined the way that kids seek approval from others and mainly from those industries that produce products that they themselves “like”, Oreo, Nike, Adidas, etc. They daily post their videos, blogs, pictures and what happened to them that day where they ask their “friends, who can number into the thousands, to “like” their posts about favorite products back. Now every time that a friend likes your post, it also appears on their homepage such that all of the friends in their circle see what they liked and can also like them. So there is an instant gratification that your likes and preferences are shared and you feel validated with your “like” affinity group.

However the most disturbing part of the story was how all of the companies that produce or distribute the product that you “liked” track all of these “friends” who “liked your likes” and begin to direct market to them. Ok, nothing new here. But, more disturbing is the fact that these companies are actually offering incentives to the individual who generates the highest number of “likes” from their posts. Some rewards are names on companies’ websites, or awards of being the highest “producer. Some of the companies become “sponsors” of the person’s blog or posts and give physical “gifts”
such as clothes, trips, and other free products. Several of the companies interviewed claimed that they didn’t even need to hire additional marketing staff as the youth were doing this for them. And they tailor their whole marketing campaign to the internet, incentivizing the children with fame and success and recognition to serve as their marketers.

Now this brought up in my mind even the legalities of doing this as “Is paying with gifts” actually equivalent to a salary and are their IRS implications? While I am sure there is some loophole exonerating the companies from any such claims, I was even more disturbed by the interviewers’ questioning of the children as to ‘did they know what “being used” meant?’ And the answers were mainly that they did not. Not only did they not feel used, but they didn’t even know what the concept of being used meant. They felt that they were liked, respected for their opinions, and rewarded for their loyalty to a materialistic “good” by success and material goods. They finally had an identity, they were part of a large glitzy team, and they were “happy”, (for the time being), but “addicted”.

Now most students will attend some sort of institution of higher learning, either in a community college, a technical school or a 4 year university. And it seems to me that it is here initially that we need to focus attention as well. These young adults are now eager to find an inner life that informs the outer life and brings lasting happiness. Unlike most of the K-12 public school system, universities have some degree of freedom in what they teach and how they teach. Discipline problems usually are not a main issue as in high school, because the student usually wants to be there and can leave at any time. Perhaps just because of the fact that a student’s yearning for meaning has not been satisfied puts the onus on Universities to help them find that meaning. Students, being prepared for their careers also need some introduction as to what an ethical workplace that really cares looks like, and how this care is demonstrated by their leadership (new wine) and organizational structure (new wineskin). University chaplains are perfectly positioned to help fill the need.

Are New Civil leaders Functioning in the Role of a Spiritual leader

At the two day Conference on “Free Market Economics and Happiness” held in Washington DC (February 19th -20th 2014), the keynote panelist was the Dali lama, who joined other leading “thinkers” to discuss spirituality/ethics in free market economics. Dr. Diana Chapman Walsh, former President of Wellesley stressed the critical need for a new kind of leadership in today’s businesses, in government, and in every sector of society. “To morally lead others, one must be skillful at leading oneself with compassion, and honor that unifying impulse which connects us with every living creature on earth”. There is a need for institutions of higher learning to “sculpt leaders that are gifted in the ways of community and connection, leading from within and who
are able to manage their own inner shadows”. She sees the insight from Martin Luther King--- “The collision of immoral power with powerless morality constitutes the major crisis of our time”.--- as a challenge that we all must tackle. From her perspective, power is to enable others to find their purpose, authority and self-authorship, and to achieve that one must remain open to the other to sustain unity and maintain connection. “This new generation escaping into social media as their world spins out of control” …is being raised on information without context”. The quality of mindful presence is what must be conveyed to students to stabilize this trend. “How much of this interest in individual happiness is a sophisticated diversion, a distracting overlay of a simplistic model of social action onto a complex world as we deflect our gaze from frightening signs of instability and danger?” (from Walsh).

Furthermore, Professor Otto Scharmer from MIT told the conference that while most organizations learn by examining “lesson from the past”, that is analyzing in great detail how their past actions have met or not met their purpose, a new source of learning for emerging organizations is “learning from the emergent future”, a “leaning in” which includes more innovative and intuitive listening, reflecting and action. It is a new way of framing the emerging future by engaging “mindfulness” processes to clarify intension and “activate a response. The 3 skills required are 1. An open mind; 2. An open heart; and 3. An open will to “deeply access and activate the deep creative and entrepreneurial core dormant in EVERY human being”. I think pastors must learn and perfect these skills as well. And so this brings us back full circle to the concept of Pastoral care. We owe it to the next generation to aid them in discovering who they ultimately are and to reclaim for themselves their “original blessing”.

Further Thoughts---

I realize this seems to be quite a diversion from the traditional way that Christian organizations approach pastoral counseling. But I think that the important message to be learned is that leaders in society as a whole, not just religious clergy are becoming leaders in spirituality, ethical behavior, contemplation/mindfulness and finding one’s inner identity through spiritual practices. They are assuming their “priestly duties” as humans. They are the ones that society at large seems to be turning to, not to the Church, and I believe they are helping set the right direction. Perhaps this is the greatest indication of the void that exists between what Churches have traditionally offered and what the human soul is craving today.

Recently Ken Wilber was questioned as to why today’s organizations that are practicing “mindfulness” are less likely to call it meditation.-- Why everyone will “buy into” centering practices to get “into the zone” “be the best you can be” (in terms of performance), and
“access the inner creative core” but not call it unifying with God or the Divine. I think his response was a powerful message for all of us who pastor. To paraphrase from a lecture presented 2/28/14 on The Fourth Turning, he said that all of the “institutional religions” who had claimed that their message was love were the greatest source of warfare, suffering and “human to human” meanness… that the hurt, confusion and upsetness is still foremost in our minds today…and people are not afraid to speak out anymore and now demand transparency. He also said that as more and more people evolve into higher consciousness, they realize what meditation is really all about—connection with Spirit, oneness God and the higher dimensions of our own being. That “universal hunger” for unity is still there craving fulfillment. Perhaps this present “gap” in the realization as to what “mindfulness “ practices are all about is a way for our pastoral counseling to speed the procession into a higher consciousness of the Divine for all—to speed up the birth of the Divine Human. Perhaps we are here at this point in history to make religion “safe” and inclusive again, to live up to the promises that Jesus made to his disciples that they shall do this and more. And to usher in the “kingdom consciousness” that Jesus saw and embodied.

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