

Mystery

“Religion has always been about honoring mystery. [But] we have created people who’ve been afraid of ambiguity, mystery.”



- Fr. Richard Rohr

1st break:

“So, what the hell can we know about anything?”

What are some of your certainties that make you a heretic?

2nd break:

Describe some of the characteristics of Jesus the Mystic.

Nelson recounts Rabbi Heschel claiming that there’s no distinction between the sacred and the secular. Explain.

3rd break:

How does the Cosmic Christ or Cosmic Wisdom lead to mysticism?

How does embracing cosmic mysticism affect our relationship with the environment?

How would acknowledging that “we dwell in Mystery” affect one’s day-to-day outlook on the world?

4th break:

What are the implications of science and religion having gone in two different directions?

Why is embracing uncertainty a virtue?

List some of the ways bringing back the sense of Mystery can call us beyond our knowing into an exploration of the Holy.

In your own words, describe the “one reality.”

Borg calls God “Mystery” with a capital “M.” How does this counter our inclination toward embracing “tight maps of reality?”

List some of the negative consequences of giving in to our tendency toward excessive certitude.

General Reflection:

What do you find most helpful or interesting from the material so far?

What are the implications for your personal spiritual journey? For Christianity as a whole?

Words of Wisdom

When Elijah is off hiding in the mountains, a great wind shatters the rocks and earthquake and fire tears the mountains. Then God speaks to Elijah in a “still, small voice”, a gentle whisper, “a murmuring sound.” The Hebrew word used to describe the sound literally means the sound of “new-fallen dew on grass.” New-fallen dew on grass?!? *That’s* the sound of God?!? Perhaps what the author of *Kings* was taking a stab at was embracing the idea of Mystery -- that which is unexplainable or beyond comprehension. Its Greek root of the word “mystery” implies the closing of eyes and lips, suggesting that which is beyond our ability to see or even comprehend.

Read 1 Kings 19.11-13

After being repeatedly questioned and prodded by Job, God finally lets loose with a tirade extolling the mysteries of creation. The poet/author of Job imagines what God might say in encouraging Job to appreciate the vast, wild, incomprehensible nature of the Divine.

Read Job 38-42.6

Spirit Practice

Mystery refers to something unexplainable and beyond comprehension. It derives from the Greek word “myein” that refers to the eyes and lips and means “to close.” In other words, it is beyond humankind’s ability to see and define.

The most common use of mystery is linked to novels, murder, and plays, all of which come to a conclusion in a set amount of time or words. These applications delude us into a false sense that mystery is something to be solved instead of embraced. Often we transfer that approach onto our journey with the Divine.

Intentionally be open to Mystery for 30 minutes. Each time your brain strives to define or see God, ask for openness to “know” there is more. Each time you want to describe God in human likeness, give thanks that Mystery is beyond our complete knowing. Work your way up to being open to Mystery for an hour, then two. Can you go an entire day?

Try it

Jim Burklo has written new words to the traditional hymn “Holy, Holy, Holy.” If you’re part of a fellowship that uses traditional worship, perhaps you could use these words as one way to encourage embracing mystery.

Love Now Ascending

(“Holy, Holy, Holy” – tune: Nicaea)

Lyrics by Jim Burklo*

Holy, holy, holy, love now ascending
Early in the morning
our song shall rise to you.
Holy, holy, holy, joy that has no ending
Giving, forgiving,
breathing life anew.

Holy, holy, holy, love without a limit
Care that binds creation in sacred unity,
Holy, holy, holy, birthing every minute,
Christ, Love’s revealer,
sets our spirits free.

Holy, holy, holy, infinite compassion,
Makes a place for every soul
in God’s eternal reign,
Holy, holy, holy, truth beyond religion,
Love that endures
should nothing else remain.

Holy, holy, holy, raise your voice in singing,
Join the cosmic chorus
in praise of Love divine,
Holy, holy, holy, God beyond all naming,
Echoes our song in harmony sublime.

**Words used by permission of the author. See Jim’s website: www.openchristianity.com.*