

Women Mystics of the Catholic Church

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To rediscover the story of the Christian mystics is a great adventure. Their manifold experiences and examples can be truly empowering for our own lives. Mystics traveled along the margins of the ordinary and the extraordinary, the world of the mundane and the world of the spirit, where all things are made whole. Today, at the beginning of a new millennium, we too are finding ourselves at an important threshold of a new, perhaps different and more difficult world, where we can gain much from spiritual nourishment. The Christian mystics speak to us across the centuries, and if we listen, we can learn something about the deepest experiences of their lives, so that we too may glimpse the glory of God and feel the healing touch of the Spirit. (King 2001, 4)

As these words from scholar Ursula King's *Christian Mystics: Their Lives and Legacies Throughout the Ages* suggest, the mystics of the Christian tradition offer useful lessons for those of us who seek to live prophetic lives. As the lives of the women I talk about in this chapter reveal, one way to describe a prophet is as a mystic in action.¹

My focus on women mystics is not intended as a slight against the male mystics of the Catholic Church, which include some who are deep favorites of mine (men like Thomas Merton, Ignatius of Loyola and John of the Cross). But some of the greatest mystics in the history of the Church have been women and the experience of those women is a source of strength and encouragement for contemporary women. Women like the ones I will share a little bit about often showed extraordinary strength and courage, especially if one takes into account the social limitations of their times,

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¹ Matthew Fox uses this term in his book *The Coming of the Cosmic Christ*. (Fox 1988, 63)

challenging conventional ideas about gender. They heard God and they did not keep quiet about it. They recorded their experiences in journals, treatise, letters, music and visionary poetry. It was not their aim to form an opposition to the Church and society of their day, but, as Carol Lee Flinders observed in *Enduring Lives*, “when God comes to visit, you don’t keep quiet about it out of fear you might disquiet the bishop, and you don’t reword what you actually heard or censor what you saw.” (Flinders 2006, 19) In short, these women were prophets and servants of truth.

The terms “mystic” and “mysticism” scare some people. The words sound mysterious, otherworldly, causing many to think of mystics as strange people one should stay away from. Or, at least, they think of mystics as people divorced or very different from us, as somehow special – someone that is not me. I proceed from a very different understanding – the belief that we are all called to be mystics.

Ursula King, in her book *Christian Mystics*, defines a mystic in this way:

A mystic is a person who is deeply aware of the powerful presence of the divine spirit: someone who seeks, above all, the knowledge and love of God and who experiences to an extraordinary degree the profoundly personal encounter with the energy of divine life. Mystics often perceive the presence of God throughout the world of nature and in all that is alive, leading to a transfiguration of the ordinary all around them. However, the touch of God is most strongly felt deep within their own hearts. (King 2001, 3)

In short, she says, “The story of the Christian mystics is one of an all-consuming, passionate love affair between human beings and God.” (King 2001, 3) So, when we talk about mysticism, we are talking about a deep and abiding awareness of the presence of God, a direct and personal encounter with God, with God’s love.

I want to be clear at the outset that distinguishes the women I write about here from the rest of us is not that they had a direct experience of God that is available only to

a few. It is not that God chooses certain people to speak to and doesn't speak to the rest of us. God speaks to all of us – incessantly. These women are not special because God spoke to them. What makes them special is their openness to experiencing God, their recognition of God's communication with them, and their dedication in sharing what they experienced.

I will here share something of the stories of several of the women mystics of the Church exploring what women of today can learn from them. I would have included Hildegard among them, but as Professor King's contribution to his book focuses on Hildegard,² I'll speak about Catherine of Siena, Julian of Norwich and Teresa of Avila, and try to draw a few lessons for us from their lives.

Catherine of Siena was the first woman to be named as a Doctor of the Church. Catherine was the twenty-fourth child of a dye manufacturer, born in Siena in 1347. According to legend, she had an amazing vision of Jesus, along with Peter, Paul and John the Evangelist when she was six years old. In the vision, Jesus approached her and made the sign of the cross over her, an experience that affected her deeply. The legend continues that one year later, she had a vision of her spiritual marriage to Christ. Jesus told her that he had “determined to celebrate the wedding feast of [her] soul and to espouse [her to him] in faith.” (Raymond 2003, 99) In her vision, Catherine saw Mary placing her (Catherine's) hand in the hand of Jesus and sealing the marriage with a brilliant ring that only Catherine could see. This was a most joyous event for Catherine and she considered it as a sign that she should consecrate herself solely to Jesus. So she

² [add reference Professor King's chapter]

began playing nun, and spent time trying to instruct neighborhood children in the ways of God. She also began spending hours alone praying to God.

Although Catherine's family was initially opposed to her religious fervor, ultimately her father became convinced to permit her to keep her vow to God. He gave her a small room in the family home so that she could pray in privacy. Lacking the ability to read, Catherine meditated on what was available to her – the crucifix on the wall of her room. She experienced God's love for her flowing from the crucifix.

Catherine lived happily in solitude in her little room for three years, until her mystical experiences, as well as talks she had with many priests and others who came and visited with her, convinced her that she had a calling to serve the poor and sick people of Siena. As one of her biographers said, "Knowing that the surest means of pleasing the divine Spouse was to be charitable towards the neighbor, her heart burned with the desire of relieving him in all his wants." (Raymond 2003, 83-84)

One particular vision was instrumental in causing the reclusive Catherine to venture forth from her private room. She was conversing with Jesus, who reminded her of the passage in Matthew where he is asked what is the greatest commandment. We all know by heart Jesus response: Love the Lord your God with all your heart, soul and mind, and love your neighbor as yourself. (Matt. 22:37-39) Jesus then told Catherine: "I desire that thou shouldst become more closely united to me by charity towards thy fellow creatures. ...I desire that thou shouldst walk, not on one, but on two feet, and fly to heaven on two wings." (Butler 1895, 66) Jesus assured Catherine that far from her actions in the world taking her away from time with Jesus, they would bring her closer.

He told her, “Wheresoever thou mayest go in the future, I will be with thee; I will never leave thee, but will visit thee, and direct all thy actions.” (Butler 1895, 68)

As one scholar described, “Catherine was a mystic whose plunge into God plunged her deep into the affairs of society.” (Noffke 1980, xi) She not only offered her services in a local hospital (which included caring for lepers and those suffering from the plague) and baked bread for the poor of Siena, but she also served as a mediator between feuding families and helped broker a peace agreement between the city of Florence and the government of the papal states. Even more amazingly, she helped heal the rift in the Church caused by papal politics.

People responded to Catherine; they flocked to her constantly. It is reported that wherever she went, a dozen priests had to accompany her to receive confessions from the men and women whose faith in God she had reawakened. God told her in another of her visions that “Your neighbors are the channel through which all your virtues are tested and come to birth,” (Noffke, *Dialogue*, 38) and Catherine took God’s word seriously. She was truly faithful to the command that Jesus had given her, a command Jesus given to all of us, making her a worthy role model.

Most of what we know about the fruits of Catherine’s prayer life comes from a work titled *The Dialogue*, which Catherine started writing two years before her death, and which is now hailed as a classic of Western spirituality. The work records a series of questions she put to God and God’s responses to her.

One of the recurring themes of *The Dialogue* is God’s deep love for humanity. In words reminiscent of the beginning of the Book of Jeremiah in the Hebrew Scriptures

(Jeremiah 1:5), God tells Catherine, “I loved you before you came into being.” (Noffke, *Dialogue*, 226) God’s words to Catherine on this love are words meant for all of us:

It was with providence that I created you, and when I contemplated my creature in myself I fell in love with the beauty of my creation. It pleased me to create you in my image and likeness with great providence. I provided you with the gift of memory so that you might hold fast my benefit and be made a sharer in my own, the eternal Father’s power. I gave you understanding so that in the wisdom of my only-begotten Son you might comprehend and know what I the eternal Father want, I who gave you graces with such burning love. I gave you a will to love, making you a sharer in the Holy Spirit’s mercy, so that you might love what your understanding sees and knows. All this my gentle providence did, only that you might be capable of understanding and enjoying me and rejoicing in my goodness by seeing me eternally. (Noffke, *Dialogue*, 277)

Catherine’s life in the world and her life of prayer cannot be separated. Her love of God and love of others was inextricably linked. What she experienced in her prayer led her to reach out to sick and sinful people, to arbitrate disputes, and to seek reform in the church. Her daily activities were present in her prayer, and at the same time her prayer and contemplation were present in her activities to the extent that she often prayed in the middle of what she was doing or saying.

In the words of one commentator: “Catherine experienced the reality that union with God affects every fiber of our being and every action of our life. Episodes in Catherine’s life and in our own lives are vessels that contain the presence and actions of God. The stuff of life is the meeting ground between humanity and divinity. The Scriptures bear out this truth time and time again. Hearing the story of Catherine is like entering into her spirit, which is a spirit wrapped in God and knit to the world.” (Vinje 1990, 24) What a beautiful expression of what we are called to be: wrapped in God and knit to the world!

Julian of Norwich, sometimes referred to as Dame Julian or Mother Julian, and even sometimes as Saint Julian, although she was never canonized, was one of the four great mystical writers of the 14th century.

Julian was born in 1342, at a time when it was very unpleasant to be living in England. This is the time of the Black Death, the plague, which not only was responsible for many deaths, but also led to horrible social conditions and oppression of the poor. Taxes and prices were high, the harvests were bad and there was a lot of revolt. The Church was not doing much better: the various religious orders were at odds with each other and the Pope had left Rome and was living in exile in Avignon. This is the world in which Julian lived.

When Julian was about thirty she suffered from a serious illness and was expected to die. A priest was called to administer the last rites to her and it is reported that her mother closed her eyelids, believing her to be on the point of death. On the seventh day of her illness, the medical crisis passed and, she had sixteen “showings,” to use her term – dramatic revelations of God’s love in which she was led to contemplate the passion of Christ.³ These showings – which included different visions of Christ’s passion, as well as of Mary and of the Trinity – led her to decide to live a life of seclusion. Much of the rest of her life was devoted to understanding the meaning of this divine revelation.

Julian became an anchoress, that is, a person who, with the permission of the local bishop, completely withdrew from society and lived a life of prayer and contemplation. Julian’s anchorhold was a room of about ten feet square with an internal window through which she could see the high altar of the church and take part in services and meditate

³ The book Julian wrote of her experiences is titled *Revelations of Divine Love*, but is also sometimes referred to as *A Revelation of Love in Sixteen Showings*, or simply, *Showings*.

upon the Blessed Sacrament. It has a second window looking out onto a road and it is at that window that people would stop to speak with her and ask for her prayers and help. There may also have been a door or a third window to be used to communicate with a serving-woman; we know that she had two servants to shop and transact necessary business for her.

Julian's contact with other people was not separate from her prayer, but in some ways was the fruit of it. Her experience of God generated in her a deep love for other people; she truly understood the union of the great commandments to love God and to love one another. She wrote that as a result of her first vision, "I felt great love toward all my fellow Christians; for I wanted them all to share my understanding of everything I saw – I knew it would comfort them. And I felt sure that this revelation was for all the world to see." (Julian, *Revelation*, 18) And so Julian understood that even though she confined herself to her anchorhold, she could not be completely alone and uninvolved in the anguish of the world; that spirituality could never be a purely personal quest for peace and inner harmony.

Through one window, Julian contemplated the mysteries of the faith, seeing Jesus in the Eucharist. Through the other window, she contemplated the Body of Christ in its daily human form. Through her counsel to travelers and townspeople, she let the fruits of her contemplation spill over in compassion for her sisters and brothers.

God's love that was central for Julian. She said on one occasion: "I could have said with St. Paul: Nothing shall separate me from the love of Christ." (Julian, *Revelation*, 34) As her quotation of St. Paul illustrates (a quotation immediately following a reference to St. Peter, Julian's writing displays the centrality of scripture in

her faith and a great knowledge of the scripture. “Our faith,” she said, “is grounded on God’s word.” (Julian, *Revelation*, 63)

Julian’s vision of the object “about the size of a hazelnut” (which was one of her earliest showings and is really the foundation of her subsequent writing) helped her to gain insight into the awesome power of God the Creator, whose hands hold the entire universe. God holds in his hand this tiny thing, which seems so fragile and insignificant that Julian wonders that it doesn’t just crumple in God’s hand. This thing, which is the entirety of the created universe, is held in the hand of the God who created it. What she gained a deep understanding of is that fact that we are created out of God’s love. Julian wrote, “This lasts and it will go on lasting forever because God loves it. And so it is with every being that God loves.” (Julian, *Revelation*, 9-10)

Over and over again, Julian tells us that God rejoices in his creation. “And so I saw that God rejoices that he is our Father, and God rejoices that he is our Mother, and God rejoices that he is our true spouse, and that our soul is his beloved wife.” (Julian, *Revelation*, 113) Despite our sin, God, according to Julian, still sees humanity as the crowning glory of his creation. She wrote, “For it is revealed that we are his crown, which crown is the Father’s joy, the Son’s honor, the Holy Spirit’s delight, and endless bliss to all who are in heaven.” (Julian, *Revelation*, 112)

Julian’s experience of God’s love generated in her a profound love for all she met. It also compelled her to want to help others come to the same experience she did.

Teresa of Avila, one of my great favorites, was a woman who displayed a remarkable independence of spirit in Sixteenth Century Spain, during a time when the Church was not particularly tolerant of independence of thought or spirit and when no

one was tolerant of such a characteristic in a woman. She bent Church rules, she barely survived the Spanish Inquisition, she annoyed many with her reform of both the male and female Carmelite orders, and she did it all while suffering debilitating illness through most of her life – living with almost constant pain. At the same time, she authored a body of written work that many would call the cornerstone of Christian mysticism, and she is, even today, one of the most widely read writers in the Spanish language.

Let me talk about Teresa by talking about some of her defining characteristics. Doing so helps us to see some of the characteristics of woman as prophet.

First, Teresa was a *woman of great determination*. This was probably her most outstanding trait. When she knew God wanted something, she was completely committed to doing it.

Many obstacles put in her way both because she was a woman and because the reforms she was instituting were not uniformly appreciated. Convents in her day were often a haven for well-to-do women. They came with their money, their fine clothing and their other belongings, and hosted many friends – including men. They often lived quite comfortably and lived anything but renounced lives. Teresa wanted nothing to do with that way of being, and was quite vocal about it. One can imagine how well that went over! Yet she persevered and accomplished tremendous amount.

In the *Way of Perfection*, she talks about people setting out on a serious prayer life. She says:

“how they are to begin is very important – in fact, all important. They must have a great and very resolute determination to persevere until reaching the end, come what may, happen what may, whatever work is involved, whatever criticism arises, whether they arrive or whether they die on the road.” (Teresa of Avila, “Way of Perfection”, 117)

Determination means more than wishing something to happen but never making up the mind to do what needs to be done to get it. (“Gee wouldn’t it be nice if…” is pretty easy.) The key is being committed to getting it done. That is the crux. We all have sufficient grace from God to become saints, but we may not all have the determination to do it.

Second, Teresa was a *woman of courage and confidence in the Lord*. Teresa believed that God would give her the strength she needed to carry out his commands. She instructed her sisters:

“I have often mentioned this, and now I repeat and ask that you always have courageous thoughts. As a result of them the Lord will give you grace for courageous deeds. Believe that these brave thoughts are important.” (Teresa of Avila, “Way of Perfection”, 230)

At another time she observed:

Have great confidence, for it is necessary not to hold back one’s desires, but to believe in God that if we try we shall little by little, even though it may not be soon, reach the state the saints did with God’s help...I marvel at how important it is to be courageous in striving for great things along this path.” (Teresa of Avila, “Book of Her Life”, 123)

Teresa had great need of courage and confidence. The Spain she was born into had a climate of fear and suspicion. This is the time of the Spanish Inquisition, characterized by excessive fear of the devil, and the Inquisition was aggressive in seeking out any semblance of heretical teachings or enmity against the Church. Teresa, in fact, was questioned by the Inquisition. But she was not intimidated. When cautioned to be careful in what she taught or wrote to avoid the wrath of the Inquisition, this was her reaction:

“This amused me and made me laugh...And I said they shouldn’t be afraid about these possible accusations, that it would be pretty bad for my

soul if there were something in it of the sort that I should have to fear the Inquisition; that I thought if I had something to fear I'd go myself to seek out the Inquisitors; and if I were accused, the Lord would free me, and I would be the one to gain." (St. Teresa, *Autobiography*, 311)

Being a woman at the time made for an even greater need for courage. Not only was this a culture where women were not educated and not particularly prized for anything they did outside of the home (making Teresa sometimes feel inadequate to the tasks Jesus set for her), but there was a particular nervousness during this period surrounding women, who were seen as daughters of Eve and handmaids of the devil in their ability to tempt men away from righteousness. Teresa once complained in prayer: "Since the world's judges are sons of Adam and all of them men, there is no virtue in women that they do not hold suspect." (Teresa of Avila, "Way of Perfection", 51)

Third, Teresa was a *woman of receptivity to God's Word*. Teresa was eager for God's Word. She understood its transformative power. She heard it, she (like Mary) pondered it and she profited from what she heard. (Teresa once said that she never heard a sermon from which she did not profit. She so loved God's word that when she was listening to someone who was dull, so long as there was truth being said, she profited from it. I always cringe a bit at that, thinking of my own occasional tuning out when I decide a homilist has nothing to say.)

Sometimes, even the word God was enough to send her into deep prayer. Once Teresa was talking to someone in the parlor and the person simply used the name God in conversation, and Teresa fell into ecstasy.

Fourth, Teresa was a *woman who took Joy in life*. People loved to be in Teresa's company because she was so lively and full of joy and had a marvelous sense of humor. She had a gift for celebration and did not believe that having a serious prayer life meant

that one could not enjoy life. She saw in the Gospels that Jesus enjoyed communal meals and companionship with his friends and saw nothing wrong in doing the same. She practically observed on one occasion: “When I fast, I fast. And when I eat partridge, I eat partridge.” (Beilecki, 1994, 94)

Teresa loved to dance and sing on feast days. Music was a source of great joy for her and she also wrote poetry. She took great joy in nature and found that it helped her to look at a field or water or flowers; they reminded her of God. (One sees this same joy of music in Hildegard.)

Teresa’s joy and humor helped her in the face of difficulties. Once when there was serious infestation of lice disturbing her sisters, she organized a procession with musical instruments, singing, a nonsense song of her creation, with the sisters carrying a processional cross which they called “Christ of the Lice.”

Fifth, Teresa was a *woman of Relationship*. Teresa knew that she could profit from the counsel and friendship of spiritual friends and advisers. She believed that if one seeks self-knowledge, a good spiritual director was necessary – someone who was prudent, experienced and learned.

“It will be possible to find both learning and goodness in some persons. And the more the Lord favors you in prayer, the more necessary it will be that your prayer and good works have a good foundation.” (Teresa of Avila, “Way of Perfection”, 59)

“It is very important to consult persons with experience; for you will be thinking that you are seriously failing to do some necessary thing.” (Teresa of Avila, “Interior Castle”, 303)

Teresa understood that religious experience must be discerned and she had a number of spiritual directors at various times. This was an important realization; since

we can be deceived by what St. Ignatius might term the “enemy spirit”, religious experience must be discerned carefully.

Teresa was often visited by God with intellectual visions and locutions, manifestations in which the exterior senses were not at all affected, but what she saw and heard was directly impressed upon her mind. Some of her religious advisers had difficulty with her vivid experiences of God’s presence within her. Some thought her raptures and visions were the work of the evil. Others ridiculed her as a victim of delusion or a hypocrite.

Nonetheless, she had a number of inspired directors, including St. Peter of Alcantara, Gaspar de Salazer, Francisco de Salcedo and Garcia de Toledo to name a few. And she was able to learn from them. Among the people she had a close relationship with was John of the Cross, although he was a little reserved for her taste. He served as Teresa’s confessor for a time and helped her to think critically about her mystical experiences.

Teresa herself performed the same role of spiritual adviser both to the women over whom she was prioress at various times, and to many men to whom she served as spiritual advisor. To her credit, she had as much difficulty with those who had blind obedience to authority when it came to her commands as she had blindly obeying the commands of others. There is a story that when she was prioress at St. Joseph’s in Toledo, all she needed to do was mention something casually and it was immediately carried out. In exasperation one day, she said while looking at a pond in the garden to a nun standing nearby, “But what would happen if I were to say jump in.” She no sooner

got the words out of her mouth when the nun jumped in, getting completely soaked in the process. (Teresa of Avila, “Book of Her Foundation”, 176-77)

Finally, Teresa was a *woman of Repentance*. Someone who truly loves another does not want to offend them in even the smallest things and Teresa is described as having a tender conscience. Doubtless this developed in part because Spain at the time had a heavy consciousness of sin, but in larger part it reflected her love of God. In the permissive society in which we live, which tends to overlook little matters, her words are worth hearing:

There has come upon me a very strong determination not to offend God, not even venially; for I would die a thousand deaths rather than offend God knowingly. There is the determination not to omit anything I think is more perfect or will render greater service to our Lord. I obey my confessor, although imperfectly. Yet, once I have understood that he wants something or has given me a command, insofar as I know I wouldn't fail to carry it out; and were I to fail, I would think I was being very much mistaken. (Teresa of Avila, “Spiritual Testimonies”, 374)

As I said before, these are instructional characteristics to keep in mind. They were all part of what made Teresa so open to her experiences with God and they help us understand the qualities that help us become prophets.

Lessons

What lessons do we draw from these women? I would here identify four:

First, they model lives in which God comes first. We are often guilty of mixing means and ends. The end is God – always God. My own spirituality is heavily Ignatian.

St. Ignatius' *Principle and Foundation* includes the idea that

All the things in this world are also created because of God's love,... presented to us so that we can know God more easily and make a return of love more readily. ... In everyday life, then, we must hold ourselves in balance before all of these created gifts insofar as we have a choice and are not bound by some obligation. We should not fix our desires on health or sickness, wealth or poverty, success or

failure, a long life or short one. For everything has the potential of calling forth in us a deeper response to our life in God. Our only desire and our one choice should be this: I want and I choose what better leads to God's deepening his life in me. (Fleming 1996, 27)

I think it is fair to say that each of these women put God front and center.

For each of them, that included sacrifice. Carol Lee Flinders, writing about the women mystics says,

All of them, to one degree or another, really did set aside personal comfort in pursuit of larger goals. Even if to only a modest extent, they came to feel the suffering of others as their own, and, in working to relieve it, they experienced a mysterious enlargement, often even a kind of exaltation, regardless of the disappointments or chronic exhaustion the work itself entailed. (Flinders 1993, xvii)

As Christ did in making the ultimate sacrifice, these mystics willingly bore their difficulties out of love of God and others.

Second, the union of God and work in the world. Our personal relationship with God - our personal encounter with Christ - is necessary but it is not sufficient. By that I mean that as Catholics, we live for the life of the world; that faith can never just something between me and God. Instead we are called to be the Body of Christ to the world. We are called to teach, to heal, to inspire, and to offer hope to the world, and we do so as an expression of our faith and as an outgrowth of our relationship with Christ. Pope Francis spoke eloquently on the inherent relationship between contemplation and concern for others in his Apostolic Exhortation, *Evangelii Gaudium*. Speaking in the first person, but making it quite clear he was speaking of all of us he wrote

My mission of being in the heart of the people is not just a part of my life or a badge I can take off; it is not an "extra" or just another moment in life. Instead, it is something I cannot uproot from my being without destroying my very self. I am a mission on this earth; that is the reason why I am here in this world. We have to regard ourselves as sealed, even branded, by this mission of bringing light,

blessing, enlivening, raising up, healing and freeing. (Pope Francis 2013, par. 273)

And so we pray – of course – and we go on retreat, and we do many other things to nourish our faith, to deepen our relationship with our loving God. But we can't stop there. While a small minority of us are called to enter contemplative orders of nuns whose primary service to others is praying for them, most of us are charged to go out into the world and to share our faith and our love with others. Our personal and committed relationship with God commits us to serving others.

One way to say that is that we are each called to be both Mary and Martha in the world. And the lives of these women are a testament to that truth. Each of them modeled a life “flying to heaven on two wings” (Butler 1895, 66), as Jesus said to Catherine.

Third, God will give us the strength we need. Each of these women understood their need for God, that they could not do it all on their own. They embraced poverty of spirit, but also had utmost trust that God would see them through, even when things seemed bleak.

Finally, that we must have the courage to speak truth to power. And we do so knowing that there will be a cost to that.

I think each of these three women are wonderful models for women of today. Each of their experience of God touched them to the core, changed everything about who they were. Those experiences transformed them into prophets of God's love. They live the truth of the famous Pedro Arrupe quote that I leave you with:

Nothing is more practical than finding God, that is, than falling in a love in a quite absolute, final way. What you are in love with, what seizes your imagination will affect everything. It will decide what will get you out of bed in the mornings, what you will do with your evenings, how you spend your weekends, what you

read, who you know, what breaks your heart, and what amazes you with joy and gratitude. Fall in love, stay in love, and it will decide everything. (Burke 2007).

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