

A
Celebration
of

Our "Close Call"

into

the

Institute

of the

Blessed Virgin Mary

'CLOSE CALL' TO LOVE AND SERVICE

Religious vocation is a "close call". Close, meaning intimate or near and close, meaning precarious. We are no different from our Old or New Testament models. Samuel could stand up and say, "Here I am Lord". Moses was stopped in his tracks. Jonas turned his back so as not to get involved and wound up at the feet of the people he was to serve.

The Apostles who asked of Jesus, "Where do you live?" ended up answering the invitation, "Come follow me". The rich young man walked away sad and Paul had to learn to see in a new light. The whole of our life is orientating each of us to turn to God. In an excerpt from a 17th century document now popularized in the words of the song "Desiderata" it is stated, "...whether or not it is clear to you, no doubt the universe is unfolding as it should."

Mother Mary Ward could not see the unfolding of her life. She could not have known that three centuries after her death, sisters on five continents would be claiming her as foundress of the Institute of the Blessed Virgin Mary.

She lived in 17th Century England, a time of severe religious persecution. Her call was to help preserve the faith of her countrymen. This depended on proper instructions. Setting up schools for this purpose was neither lawful nor possible in her homeland.

As Abraham of old she took herself away from the familiarity of home and crossed the channel to Europe where she opened schools for English girls. To do this she needed the resources of people with similar interest. Her life style was copied after that of the Society of Jesus, which was not readily accepted by church leaders of her day. She felt there could be no cloister and no external uniformity of dress.

The description she gives for her Sisters was that they be "...endowed with the zeal of apostles and the recollection of hermits." In the concluding statements of our 1973 general chapter in Toronto is described her legacy to us.

It is freedom of spirit, justice, and verity in a call to total dedication. To be totally free, in the Gospel context, to be wholly and joyously available to God with all our capacities and energies. To be just, that comprehensive virtue of the Old Testament, is to orientate our lives in rectitude toward God, his people and the world we live in. To have verity is to have that harmony of being that rejects all pretense. To be what we appear, and to appear what we are, in order that what our minds understand ever more deeply of the Father, our lips may speak and our bodies live. It is that "condition of complete simplicity that costs no less than everything." That dedication to God's glory that inspires and compels those who hear the call to accept "any work of love and service" Divine Providence unfolds to them.

Song: 1. Sing of Mary, pure and lowly, Virgin mother undefiled. Sing of God's own Son most holy, Who became her little child. Fairest child of fairest mother, God the Lord who came to earth, Word made flesh, our very brother, takes our nature by his birth.

2. Sing of Jesus, son of Mary, In the home at Nazareth. Toil and labor cannot weary, love enduring unto death. Constant was the love He gave her, though He went forth from her side forth to preach, and heal, and suffer, till on Calvary He died.

Prayer: (From EUCHARISTIC LITURGIES, John Gallen, S.J.)

Celebrant: With hearts grateful to the Lord for the food which gives us strength and the joy which brightens our lives, let us pray:

Together: Father you are the source of all that is good;
from your hands come food and drink
and the blessed gifts of life and peace.
We gather here to call on your name,
for you are near, in your word, in your people,
in all that you have made.
We are proud that you are humble enough
to walk with us and talk with us;
your presence in our midst fills us with joy.
And all the earth rejoices that you are our God.
Speak to us now your life-giving word,
the word that comes to nourish us,
the word that is not spoken in vain.
We ask this in the name of Jesus, your Word-made-flesh,
who is our brother and our Lord today and every day,
now and forever. Amen.

1st Reading: Ephesians 5:19,20

Meditation Song: Set Me as a Seal

2nd Reading: Philippians 4:4-7

Alleluia, Alleluia (Sing) "If anyone thirsts, let him come to me." Alleluia, Alleluia

Gospel: John 7:37-39

Petitions:

Renewal of Commitment: Almighty and eternal God, I, ... moved with the desire of serving you in others and of serving others through you, renew and confirm with all my heart my commitment to community through the vows of celibacy, dependence and obedience in the Institute of the Blessed Virgin Mary in which I promise to promote your glory, in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit.

Celebrant: In the name of the Trinity I accept your vows and promise you in the name of God eternal life if you keep your vows and his commandments.

Bring Up Gifts:

Offertory Song: Take and receive, O Lord my Liberty.
Take all my will, my mind, my memory.
All things I hold, and all I own are thine.
Thine was the gift to thee I all resign.
Do thou direct and govern all and sway
Do what thou wilt, command and I obey.
Only thy grace, thy love on me bestow
These make me rich, all else will I forgo.

Meditation Song after Communion: Let all that is within me cry holy. (2 times)
Holy, holy, holy is the Lamb that was slain.
(worthy, thank you, Jesus)

Recessional: Only a Shadow

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