

Liturgy of Commitment, August 25, 1982
St. Philomene's

Strong is His love for us; He is faithful forever.
This is our conviction, which makes us certain of what we cannot yet see.
It confirms our joy in having free access to the Source of all strength.

Our Lady is a beacon for our hope. Her life was a constant becoming; from the first moment of her "Yes," through darkness, she lived in hope.

To become what we are called to be - involves a hope-filled process of change -- through pain, to growth, to flower, to fruit, to death, to rebirth. To go out and bear fruit involves the pain of birth.

Our ministry partakes of the Apostolic call voiced by Jesus in today's Gospel, "Go, announce the reign of God." We announce the Kingdom of God by who we are as we live His word. The Lord calls us today to witness to a world buffeted by war, violence, materialism, by alienation, impotence, and despair.

Invited to be signs of hope within this struggling world, Mary Ward's charism of courageous joy can enable us to witness in the way Chesterton describes: "The one who is signed with the cross of Christ, goes merrily in the dark."

Ours is a corporate vocation. In response to God's call we have chosen to work as members of a community, hoping to live this life constantly, efficaciously, affectionately. Our love to one another, our support to each other, our communal action together on the local and the new regional level can be a sign of hope in a climate of war and violence.

In an orchestra the music created by the ensemble possesses power to move its hearers to greater heights and depths than can any one instrument alone. (As one who played double bass, and spent half her time counting measures well knows). The director with silent, unifying signals calls forth and blends the unique contributions of each musician, each instrument. May the creative rapport of our new US region of the Institute produce a harmony that lifts hearts and brings peace to all those we serve.

Today we re-dedicate ourselves -- give ourselves anew, now-- with all the variety of gifts of which the First Reading spoke.

Each of us as she is, together as we are, we offer our gifts, strengths, insights, successes, influence. At the same time, we are aware of our limits and failures, our wounds and paralysis, our fears and anger.

Do we really believe that when we are weak, then we are strong?
That the Spirit can accomplish in us incomparably more than we can imagine?
That God's fatherly strength and motherly compassion touches others through us?

May we learn more and more to be non-defensive, to be given to each other in the Institute, that in sharing our weakness we may feel each other's strength.

As I struggled to face God honestly in my new responsibility, recognizing myself as sinful, impatient, aloof, aging - Psalm 103 became my prayer.

Then I realized that this great act of faith and hope reflects the human condition. It gives voice to our corporate trust in God's action in us. By giving voice to the Lord's gift of compassion toward us, this Psalm stirs our hope that He will enable us to live His love and compassion toward others.

I trust that you will be as compassionate toward my limitations, as I hope to be toward each of you.

Jesus' Last Supper conversation with His friends invited them to courage in the face of suffering, to trust in His triumph over death, to hope in His abiding presence living in them to the end.

As apostle, Mary Ward's life was one long exercise in hope, a commitment to what she could not yet see. Her "long loneliness," lived in hope, flowered at her life's end into her invitation to her sisters to join in song to praise God joyfully for His infinite, loving kindness.

Through imagination--with its link to dream, so powerful in Biblical meaning, God helps us create our future, to see beyond present reality, to allow God within us to "make all things new." We en flesh our dreams by what we are, by how we live.

I am asking that each sister examine her life and choose one concrete action, that each local community choose some simple corporate action, that frequently, even daily, during the coming year - may remind us of our need for God, our poverty before Him; may provide us with a recurring felt experience calling us to truer simplicity of life; may be a present reminder of our fellowship with the poor.

From time to time, individually and as a community, we need to take time to relish God's action in us and through us for others, to recall His gifts and renew our response to them.

This and every Eucharist enables us to unite our commitment with all those who work for and long for the realization of the reign of God. Together we and they join with Jesus in His ultimate and lasting gift of Himself to us and to the Father. Each Eucharist reaffirms Jesus' promise and our conviction that He is faithful forever.