

**Reflections for CSJ Associate Commitment Liturgy given by CSJ Associate Janet Derby and Sister Ann Christi Brink, June 10, 2012**

On the 50<sup>th</sup> day of Easter, God sent the Holy Spirit to empower the Church to perform the mission which the risen Christ has entrusted to it. The Church, the body of Christ, is filled with life through the gifts of the Spirit. Pope Benedict XVI reminds us that the Holy Spirit is shared by the Father and son-in other words they are in communion with each other. It is this distinguishing characteristic that led St. Augustine to conclude that the Spirit's particular quality is *unity*-a unity of lived communion of persons in relationship with each other-where each recognizes the dignity of the other. Together, we recognize the unifying presence of the Holy Spirit, a unifying love, and we give ourselves in service as a response to this sign of God's loving presence. St. Paul tells us in a letter to the *Corinthians* (12: 3-7, 12-13) ...

“As a body is one though it has many parts, and all the parts of the body, though many, are one body, so also Christ.”

And, so too, there are different forms of service, workings and gifts-but one God-Lord-Spirit.

Today, we celebrate the *Feast of the Most Holy Body and Blood of Christ* which has been universally observed as the *Feast of Corpus Christi* since the 14<sup>th</sup> Century-due to the perseverance of an Augustinian nun, Saint Juliana of Belgium. Partaking of the Holy Eucharist strengthens the gifts of the Holy Spirit. It enhances and deepens our faith in the Trinity.

It is fitting then, that as we celebrate this feast, we also rejoice with 8 men and women who make their first commitment as Associates, as well as the recommitment of over 80 more. As Janet and I put this reflection together, it became clear to me that the Eucharist is NOT an isolated event, celebrated each morning at St. Joseph's Provincial House. Rather, Eucharist is an invitation to enter deeply into discipleship with Jesus.

For those of us who are professed religious, this means that through God's grace we consecrate our whole being to Jesus through public vows of poverty, chastity and obedience by living simply, loving freely and listening attentively. The gift of our charism of unity and reconciliation is an additional hallmark of the Sisters of St. Joseph. Within this context our Constitution states “we direct the whole of our being to God in prayer and living, making ourselves available to share in the mission of bringing all persons to freedom and oneness in God”.

We also know many others share this charism with us. In God's plan, in 1985 our community established a formal process of Association so that women and men who experience the call to be unifiers and reconcilers may enter into a unique relationship with us. Before their first commitment, our Associates spend two years studying with a Sister mentor who teaches them our History, our Constitution and our Acts of Chapter. They gather together regularly for prayer, spiritual growth and reflection; and, are present with us at many Province events.

Therefore, although our life forms differ, we, Sisters and Associates, share a common baptismal call, a deep love of God and the dear neighbor and our charism which calls us to various forms of ministry.

Let us remember **then**, that in the mystery of the Eucharist, Christ took ordinary common elements-bread and wine- and set them apart for service. So, too, He chose ordinary people, called apostles, and set them apart for service. In a like manner, He has chosen us, ordinary, common people, and set us apart for service.

In summary, let us recall the words of the Eucharistic Letter, written in 1650 by our founder, Fr. Jean Pierre Medaille:

“Here, our dear Sister, is the purpose of our selfless congregation: It tends to achieve this total double union -

Of ourselves and the dear neighbor with God;  
and, of ourselves and all others, whoever they may be;  
of all others among themselves and with us, but totally in Jesus and in God His Father.”

AMEN!