

Homily for CSJ Associate Commitment Weekend, June 13, 2010

by Sister Clare Pelkey, CSJ

When I first looked at the Scripture readings for today's liturgy, I experienced panic! Where would I find a message/theme in these particular Scripture passages that would be meaningful and (hopefully) inspiring? Then the minutes from the Utica Associates Liturgy planning committee arrived. In them were included insights on the readings along with the theme they had chosen for liturgy : "We are called and gifted by God to journey with Jesus. Let us rejoice." What the liturgy planning committee didn't know then was that 'journey' was the context I would be using to present the overall theme for this anniversary weekend (The Heart of God Invites Us into Communion With Each Other). This journey -would be an interior one - a continuation of last year's presentation by Monica and Carol of their outer journey to our foundations in France.



From the Utica Associates insights, I gleaned the following from today's Scriptures:

In the first reading, God, through Nathan, offers David the opportunity to recognize his sin and to repent. Nathan truly takes a huge leap of faith in challenging the king in a time when kings often killed anyone who pointed out their wrongdoing! David's heart is touched by God, he admits his sin and repents.

In today's 2nd reading, Paul makes a powerful statement: (Jerusalem Bible) "I live now, not with my own life, but with the LIFE OF CHRIST who lives in me."

As part of our Opening Prayer on Friday evening, a video entitled "The Rabbi's Gift" has an abbot of a declining monastery asking for a message from a Rabbi who yearly spends a day in a hermitage on the monastery grounds. After together bemoaning the fact that the members of both their communities are now elderly and there have been no vocations, the Rabbi sends this message to the monks: "The Messiah is one of you."

-in a sense echoing the words of Paul...

Then in the Gospel reading, Jesus focuses on the great love the woman has:

- in braving the contempt and judgment of the Pharisee;
- by placing herself at the feet of Jesus in recognition of his holiness;
- in weeping tears that fell on his feet and wiping them with her hair;
- by kissing Jesus' feet and anointing them with ointment.

The Pharisee has neglected to offer the usual hospitality of washing Jesus feet, of giving him the customary kiss of welcome and of anointing his head. Jesus defends the woman - again an

unusual gesture in a culture that deemed women even less important than the animals – and emphasizes the great LOVE she had in performing this service for him.

In the three readings for today, we recognize various ways that love may be expressed:

-Nathan uses what is sometimes termed “tough love” in confronting the king. Those of you who are parents know what strong reactions can be experienced as a result of expressing this kind of love! Yet it IS a form of love that is needed with children as they approach maturity and are seeking their place in this world.

-For Paul, who had experienced a unique conversion experience, there is a great desire to share what Jesus has come to mean in his life. He has come to realize that his very BEING expresses the life and love of Jesus and he goes from one community to another, proclaiming the Good News, thus witnessing to that Love.

Your association with the Sisters of St. Joseph is an expression of your own desire to deepen YOUR love relationship with Jesus and to share in his mission and in the charism of unity and reconciliation. Some of you were recently publicly recognized for your commitment to the hungry and the marginalized among us, while all of you continually offer selfless love and service to your families, your church and your communities on a daily basis in a way that may go unnoticed.

A very powerful expression of love happens when we witness Jesus extending forgiveness for the woman as he acknowledges the great love she has in her heart. Everyone deserves love and respect, especially those whom we find difficult to love and respect. (This includes ourself as well!)

As we strive to respond to the call to Journey with Jesus and to live the Sacred Mystery of the Heart of God and communion with each other, we realize that though we can really never know the depth of the mystery of God – our prayer relationship with God, with Jesus, will lead us to the experience of God’s love in ourselves and in others who show love for us.

Those of us who are the Sisters of St. Joseph have great love and appreciation for you, our Associates, for your presence with us in carrying out the mission of Jesus wherever you live and however you minister to others. We see the Spirit of God manifested in your living out the charism of unity and reconciliation in your lives and in your ministry to God’s people. We recognize our need for you – not because our numbers are decreasing- but with the sense that in our communion all of us are living reflections of the heart of God, evoking the mystery of transformation of the world in which we live.

We rejoice with you as we continue to celebrate and deepen our communion and we look forward to the next 25 years of Journeying with Jesus to the loving Heart of God!