

October 3, 2009

## **Western Assembly - homily**

Clarann Weinert, SC

**LAST WEEK I HAD THE OPPORTUNITY TO FLY INTO WASHINGTON, DC. WHAT A SIGHT. I FREQUENTLY NEED TO BE IN DC FOR MEETINGS AND USUALLY WE FLY UP THE POTOMAC GOING INTO NATIONAL AIRPORT. BUT THIS DAY WE CAME IN FROM THE OPPOSITE DIRECTION AND I WAS SITTING AT A WINDOW SEAT THAT GAVE ME A FABULOUS VIEW OF THE CITY. THE LINCOLN MEMORIAL, THE MALL, THE WASHINGTON MONUMENTS, ANOTHER LENGTH OF THE GREEN MALL LINED UP WITH THE MAJESTIC CAPITAL BUILDING ON THE RISE AT THE END. THERE, BEFORE MY EYES, WAS A CLEAR REMINDER OF OUR RICH AND COMPLEX HISTORY AS A COUNTRY. OUR NATION'S CAPITAL IS AN IMPRESSIVE CITY FILLED WITH MUSEUMS MONUMENTS TO HOLD THE MEMORY OF KEY EVENTS AND PEOPLE IN OUR NATION'S STORY.**

**AS A NURSE SOCIOLOGY I HAVE NO REAL TRAINING IN THE DISCIPLINE OF HISTORY, BUT I AM FASCINATED WITH WHAT HISTORY TELLS US ABOUT WHO WE ARE AND WHERE WE HAVE BEEN. I WAS MESMERIZED WITH THE BANNERS THAT WERE IN THE HALL OUTSIDE THE CHAPEL THIS SUMMER. I**

**FOUND MYSELF DRAWN BACK SEVERAL TIMES TO READ THE NAMES, TO EVEN WRITE DOWN THE UNIQUE NUMBER FOR SPECIAL SISTERS OF CHARITY IN MY LIFE. I FELT HUMBLLED TO SEE MARGARET CECILIA GEORGE AS "NUMBER 1" AND TO KNOW THAT I WAS COUNTED AMONG THIS LISTING OF COUREAGOUS AND COMMITTED WOMEN, SISTERS OF CHARITY, WHO CREATED THE HISTORY FOR MY NUMBER (2169). PERHAPS YOU WERE AS TAKEN AS I WITH THESE BEAUTIFUL BANNERS THAT DOCUMENTED THE PEOPLE WHO HAVE LIVED AND ARE LIVING THE LEGACY OF CHARITY.**

**THE OPENING OF OUR 200<sup>TH</sup> ANNIVERSARY RETREAT IN JUNE WAS ANOTHER POWERFUL EMERSION IN OUR COSMIC HISTORY. I WAS SO TAKEN WITH THE MORNING OF LISTENING TO BRIAN SWIMME'S ELOQUENT PERSPECTIVE ON THE NEW STORY, THE NEW COSMOLOGY. WE STARTED THIS REFLECTION A YEAR AGO WHEN SISTER MARIE ELENA SPENT TIME WITH US CONSIDERING THE SACRED WEB OF LIFE - HELPING US TO UNDERSTAND THAT EVERYTHING THAT EXISTS IS INTER-RELATED, INTER-CONNECTED, AND INTER-DEPENDENT. THE MORE WE EXPLORE THESE MYSTERIES THE MORE WE STRETCH OUR UNDERSTANDING OF THE GRACIOUS OUTFLOWING OF OUR LOVING GOD. REFLECTING ON THE LONG HISTORY OF OUR COSMOS AND THE MIRACLE OF EVOLUTION THAT HAS**

**UNFOLDED IS HUMBLING - A STORY THAT IS BEYOND WHAT WE CAN GRASP.  
A STORY THAT TELLS US ABOUT THE BILLIONS OF YEARS THAT PRECEDED  
US AND OF THE OVERFLOWING LOVE OF OUR CREATOR GOD.**

**A BIT MORE EASILY UNDERSTOOD PIECE OF OUR HISTORY IS OUR  
CONTINUED CELEBRATION OF OUR LEGACY OF CHARITY. TODAY WE  
RECALLED THAT THIRTY YEARS AGO, THROUGH THE INITIATIVE AND  
PERSISTENCE OF THE CHAPTER OF 1979, THE SETON ENABLEMENT FUND  
WAS ESTABLISHED ---AN INVESTMENT COMMITTEE FOR THE  
EMPOWERMENT OF THE OPPRESSED WITH THE VISION TO “TO CONTINUE  
THE MISSION OF JESUS TO ALL CREATION EXPRESSED AS LOVING TRUST  
PERMEATING OUR RELATIONSHIPS, AND AS SHARING OUR RESOURCES  
WITH THOSE IN NEED.” HOW BLESSED WE ARE TO HAVE AS PART OF OUR  
COMMUNITY HISTORY THE GIFT OF A WOMAN OF VISION AND WISDOM  
MARY ASSUNTA STANG, OUR SISTER.**

**HAVING THE OPPORTUNITY TO VISIT THE *WOMEN & SPIRIT* EXHIBIT AT  
THE CINCINNATI MUSEUM TWICE THIS SUMMER WAS YET ANOTHER  
OPPORTUNITY TO APPRECIATE OUR SISTER OF CHARITY HERITAGE AND  
HOW WE FIT WITH THE MAGNIFICENT STORY OF THE INCREDIBLE**

**CONTRIBUTIONS OF WOMEN RELIGIOUS IN THE UNITED STATES.**

**CELEBRATING MY GOLDEN JUBILEE HAS ENCOURAGED ME TO ACTUALLY TAKE SOME TIME TO REFLECT, NOT ONLY ON MY PERSONAL ROLE IN THE LEGACY OF CHARITY, BUT TO EXPLORE AND APPRECIATE MORE DEEPLY OUR CORPORATE STORY AS A COMMUNITY. I NEVER THOUGHT MUCH ABOUT REACHING THE 50<sup>TH</sup> YEAR MILESTONE, AS THE YEARS JUST KEEP ROLLING ON WITH CHALLENGES AND REWARDS. BUT AS THE ACADEMIC YEAR CAME TO A CLOSE, THIS PAST MAY, AND I WAS BEGINNING TO ANTICIPATE THE SUMMER AND CELEBRATING 50 YEARS AS A SISTER OF CHARITY I FOUND MYSELF MORE AND MORE CAUGHT UP IN REFLECTING, REMEMBERING, AND REJOICING WITH OUR CALL THAT HAS BEEN HANDED DOWN THROUGH THE LAST 200 YEARS - FROM ELIZABETH ANN SETON AND MARGARET CECILIA GEORGE TO THE THOUSANDS OF WOMEN WHO HAVE HEARD AND RESPONDED IN THE YEARS SINCE.**

**IT IS A CONSISTENT CALL TO --- LIFE , LOVE, AND FRIENDSHIP. WHILE THE CALL IS CONSISTENT THE CONTEXT HAS CHANGED RADICALLY. RELIGIOUS LIFE AS WE KNOW IT TODAY WAS INCONCEIVABLE FIFTY YEARS**

**AGO AND NO ONE WAS REALLY AWARE OF THE MAGNITUDE OF CHANGE TO COME IN THE WORLD, IN THE CHURCH, AND IN RELIGIOUS LIFE. WE ENTERED ON THE CUSP OF VATICAN II, AND WE LIVED THOSE TRANSITION YEARS OF EXCITEMENT, CHALLENGE, AND TENSION, AND WE CONTINUE TO STRIVE, AS THE PEOPLE OF GOD, TO LIVE LIVES THAT FREELY ASSUME THE OBLIGATION TO RECOGNIZE AND ADDRESS THE NEEDS OF OUR TIMES.**

**EACH TIME WE GATHER FOR PRAYER AS THE PEOPLE OF GOD, AROUND THE EUCHARISTIC TABLE, WE OPEN THE STORY OF OUR HERITAGE AS CHRISTIANS. EACH TIME IS AN OPPORTUNITY TO EXAMINE MORE CLOSELY OUR HISTORY AS IMBEDDED IN THE STORY OF OUR JEWISH ANCESTORS. TODAY IN ISAIAH WE HEAR THAT THE “SPIRIT OF THE MOST HIGH IS UPON US.” HOW AWESOME. THIS SPIRIT INFUSES OUR LIVES WITH THE DESIRE TO WITNESS TO THE LOVE THAT IS AT THE HEART OF OUR SC MISSION AND MINISTRY. WE ARE WOMEN OF FAITH WHO BRING GOOD TIDINGS TO THE AFFLICTED, WHO BIND UP THE BROKENHEARTED, AND WHO PROCLAIM LIBERTY TO CAPTIVES. IN OUR CONSTITUTIONS WE SAY THAT “EACH SISTER OF CHARITY STRIVES TO GIVE COMPELLING WITNESS TO THE ACTIVE DIVINE PRESENCE BY THE WAY SHE LIVES AND MINISTERS”.**

**PAUSE PERIODICALLY AND APPRECIATE OUR CALL TO BE PRIESTS OF THE MOST HIGH TO BE MINISTERS OF OUR GOD - TAKE A FEW MINUTES TO WRITE DOWN THE WAYS OUR CONGREGATION CARRIES OUT THESE WORDS IN ISAIAH. LOOK AT THE MYRIAD OF WAYS THAT WE SISTERS OF CHARITY ARE MINISTERS OF OUR GOD ACROSS THIS COUNTRY AND BEYOND, BRINGING GOOD TIDINGS, HEALING THE BROKENHEARTED, PROCLAIMING LIBERTY TO CAPTIVES, ATTENDING TO THE MARGINALISED, WORKING TIRELESSLY FOR PEACE AND JUSTICE, AND FOR HEALING OF OUR WOUNDED EARTH. OUR LEGACY CONTINUES NEXT SATURDAY WHEN WE JOIN WITH ALICE ANN O'NEILL, A GIFTED MUSICIAN WHO IS A GENTLE MINISTER OF OUR GOD, AS SHE PROFESSES HER FINAL VOWS AS A SISTER OF CHARITY --- ARE WE NOT INDEED THE "PEOPLE WHO GOD HAS BLESSED".**

**EACH SISTER OF CHARITY IS A PART OF THAT LONG LEGACY OF LOVE. AND TODAY OUR CONGREGATION, OUR CHURCH, OUR WORLD, OUR UNIVERSE TURN TO US TO GIVE WITNESS TO WHAT IT TRULY MEANS TO LOVE ONE ANOTHER, TO SHARE HOPE AND TO FIND JOY. IN THE WORDS OF OUR BELOVED MARYANN COYLE "WE ARE NOT TOO FEW, TOO OLD, OR TOO TIRED", BECAUSE WE KNOW THAT THE SPIRIT OF THE MOST HIGH IS UPON**

**US AND THAT IN THE MESSAGE OF ISAIAH--WE ARE CALLED PRIESTS OF THE MOST HIGH AND ARE MINISTERS OF OUR GOD, WE ARE THE PEOPLE WHOM GOD HAS BLESSED.**

**OUR GOSPEL CALLS US AGAIN TO LOVE ONE ANOTHER. AS WE WERE REMINDED DURING OUR COMMUNITY RETREAT WE ARE AN INTEGRAL PART OF A SCARED WEB OF LIFE AND “THAT LOVE FOR ONE ANOTHER” EMBRACES A MUCH BIGGER CONTEXT - THE ENTIRE UNIVERSE. WE HUMAN BEINGS HAVE THE CAPACITY TO WONDER, AND TO CELEBRATE THIS GREAT MYSTERY OF EXISTENCE, OF LIFE, AND DEATH OF SUCH A MAGNIFICENT UNIVERSE.**

**THE GOSPEL STORY AT OUR GOLDEN JUBILEE LITURGY CONTAINED THE SAME MESSAGE AS WE HEARD TODAY. “I HAVE CALLED YOU MY FRIENDS, I CHOSE YOU AND APPOINTED YOU, AND I COMMAND YOU, TO LOVE ONE ANOTHER.” SUZANNE DONOVAN WAS OUR HOMILIST IN JULY AND SHE REMINDED US OF THE CONTINUED DESIRE THAT BURNS WITHIN US TO LIVE THE GOSPEL AS TRUE DAUGHTERS OF ELIZABETH AND MARGARET. AS A CONGREGATION OF CHARITY OUR WITNESS TO LOVE IS AT THE HEART OF WHO WE ARE. WE HAVE COME TO UNDERSTAND THAT LOVE IS OF GOD AND THAT LOVE BORNE OF GOD WILL ALLOW US TO SEE**

**BEYOND LIFE'S DIFFICULTIES, THE CHALLENGES OF LIVING IN COMMUNITY, THE DAY TO DAY EFFORTS TO ENGAGE IN MINISTRY THAT IS COMPASSIONATE AND LIFE GIVING TO ALL CREATION.**

**SUZANNE NOTED THAT “AS WE FACE AN UNKNOWN AND PRECARIOUS FUTURE, IT IS NOT A TIME FOR EITHER PESSIMISM OR UNREALISTIC OPTIMISM; IT IS RATHER A TIME FOR HOPE, A HOPE WHICH BINDS TOGETHER FAITH AND LOVE. JESUS IS VERY CLEAR--I COMMAND YOU, TO LOVE ONE ANOTHER. NOT A SENTIMENTAL, UNTESTED LOVE, BUT “LOVE ONE ANOTHER AS I LOVE YOU”. WHO MORE SO THAN US, SISTER OF CHARITY.....WOMEN OF LOVE.....FOLLOWERS OF THE GOSPEL, SHOULD BE BEARERS OF LOVE IN A WORLD THAT FEEDS ON FEAR AND HATE AND SEEMS AT TIMES BENT ON DESTROYING ITSELF? JESUS CALLS US FRIENDS AND ASKS THAT WE GO FORTH AND BEAR FRUIT. URGED BY THIS LOVE OF CHRIST, LET US STRIVE EACH DAY TO GIVE COMPELLING WITNESS TO CHRIST’S LOVING PRESENCE TO THE WORLD. I FOUND SUZANNE’S WORDS BOTH REAFFIRMING AND CHALLENGING.**

**SO NOW WE MOVE TO THE EUCHARISTIC TABLE IN A POSTURE OF GRATITUDE AND PRAISE. WE RECOGNIZE THE LEGACY OF LOVE THAT IS**

**OUR STORY, OUR HISTORY, AND WE ARE GRATEFUL. WE PRAISE OUR  
CREATOR GOD AND RE-COMMIT TO BEING GENTLE WITH OUR FRAGILE  
HOME - PLANET EARTH. LET US JOIN OUR HEARTS AND MINDS IN PRAYER  
AND GRATITUDE FOR THE CALL TO LIVE LIVES IN LOVE AND FRIENDSHIP.  
AND BE GRATEFUL FOR ALL THOSE WHO HAVE SUPPORTED US, FOR THE  
PRIVILEGE TO SERVE, AND TO RISK A CARING RESPONSE, FOR THE GIFT OF  
THE NEW STORY, AND FOR THE BLESSING OF RADICAL HOPE. CARITAS  
CHRISTI URGET NOS - MAY THAT LOVE OF CHRIST CONTINUE TO URGE  
EACH OF US TO WORK FOR A WORLD TRANSFORMED BY HARMONY AND  
INTERDEPENDENCE, BY LOVE, AND TRUTH, AND TRUST. RECOGNIZING OUR  
INTERDEPENDENCE WE UNITE AS ONE IN CELEBRATING THIS LITURGY OF  
GRATITUDE.**