

A Life-giving Tapestry

I think in images. What came to me as I reflected upon the varied gifts that continuously sustain and enrich my life and ministry was the image of a tapestry. This tapestry has different colors and strands, some more prominent at times than others.

The basic cloth is the gift of being a Sister of Mercy – gifted to live a vowed life, in service, in community as a member of the people of God. We Sisters of Mercy proclaim in our Constitutions that we have committed ourselves to a life-long direction of following Jesus in his compassion for suffering people. We state that “to speak our corporate word in a discordant society requires a deep faith and an interior joy.” For me, this deep faith and interior joy are nurtured through centering prayer, in times of solitude, through rich conversations and sharing with friends and co-workers, and by spending time with God in nature. In all these things, I strive to be a source of hope and energy for and with others. These nurturing and sustaining elements are the bright and varied colors in the tapestry.

Our corporate word as the people of God is Vatican II. Keeping the richness of that gift of the Spirit vibrant and alive demands, in its own way, a deep faith and interior joy. For me, this is best expressed in the opening paragraph of “The Pastoral Constitution on the Church in the Modern World” (*Gaudium et Spes*). That paragraph always lifts my spirit, gives me joy and the willingness to continue the journey in my role of service in the community:

The joys and the hopes, the griefs and the anxieties of the [people] of this age, especially those who are poor or in any way afflicted, these too are the joys and hopes, the griefs and anxieties of the followers of Christ. Indeed, nothing genuinely human fails to raise an echo in our hearts. For theirs is a community composed of [people]. United in Christ, they are led by the Holy Spirit in their journey to the kingdom of their Father and they have welcomed the news of salvation which is meant for [all people].¹

What gives me MOST encouragement – day in and day out – is another conviction stated in our Mercy Constitutions: “We believe that God is faithful and that our struggle to follow Christ will extend God’s reign of love over human hearts.” It always strikes me that we do not say our successes are what is most important, but rather our fidelity to the day-in and day-out struggle. Therefore, “we rejoice in the continued invitation to seek justice, to be compassionate and to reflect mercy to the world.”

Let us all reflect upon the tapestry of our lives and the threads that are sometimes bright, other times muted. These are the things that keep us faithful and energized and give us strength to be faithful to the struggle, just like the Christ of God.

Notes

¹ Walter M. Abbott, S.J., ed., *The Documents of Vatican II* (New York: America Press, 1966), pp. 199-200.

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