

# CONVERSATIO 2010



MONTH : November  
NUMBER : 11  
VOLUME : XL

\*\*\*\*\*

# TABLE OF CONTENTS

## **EDITORIAL**

*page 2*

## **STATIO CONFERENCE ADVENT WOMEN**

**By: S. Mary Bernard Lansang, OSB**

*page 3*

## **MIRYAM – WOMAN OF HOPE**

**By: S. Judith Ann Heble, OSB**

**(Continued)**

*page 10*

\*\*\*\*\*

St. Scholastica's Priory  
Manila

Dear Sisters,

November is the month when we set aside to remember our loved ones who have gone before us. We place flowers at their grave, have masses celebrated for them, visit their tombs. But as we remember them, we are also confronted with our own mortality which is the one sure thing that will happen in our life. During one taping for my TV show NUN-SENSE, I had a guest who has fourth degree cancer of the colon that has metastasized into her spine. But talking to her, this bubbly, high spirited woman of 56, was a picture of health. When I asked her how she reacted when she first learned of her cancer, I got another surprise. She narrated: "I was then at the Correctional for Women. My recruiting company was found guilty of an anomaly and since I owned it, I had to suffer because of command responsibility. So when the doctor said I had fourth degree cancer and had a few months to live, I rebelled against God. I asked him, if it is not enough that I have suffered the great humiliation of being put into jail – I, the first LUX girl? And now he sends me this terminal disease!" Then she went on to tell how many groups helped her in her despair especially CAREWELL, a haven for cancer conquerors as she calls those who, like herself, have survived cancer so far. Now, she said, she is no longer afraid of death. She admitted that she deserved all the humiliations and all that happened to her because she said she used to be so proud and arrogant. She considers it divine pedagogy all that she had undergone. She is even grateful that God is giving her time to prepare. She said actually she considers her cancer as a great blessing! WOW!!!

I don't think I will add any more commentary to this extraordinary example of confronting one's mortality. Let us just ponder her words in our hearts.

Sincerely yours,



Sister Mary John Mananzan, OSB

# STATIO CONFERENCE

## ADVENT WOMEN

*By*

**Sister Mary Bernard Lansang, OSB**

I was in our Center of Spirituality in Tagaytay for the Days of Prayer in our Priory-wide Renewal. I went to the garden to be in communion with God in the beauty of creation. ***Suddenly I was gripped by an overwhelming surge of loneliness.*** Tears welled up . . . I kept still before the Lord, bearing the pain of loneliness . . . slowly I felt peace dawning upon me. ***In the quiet stillness within me, that loneliness gave way to aloneness and solitude. I knew that God wanted me to feel His presence within me.***

Through the ensuing hours of that day, I was greatly helped by a reading given to us during the Renewal Session: Barbara Fiand's writings on the vowed life: encountering life in consecrated chastity. The paper quotes Karl Rahner's teachings on the vowed life.

“. . . to move into depth experience, we need **to face loneliness, to face fear. . .**  
**We need to endure ourselves.** We need to let ultimate, basic human experiences surface . . . we must endure them toward transformation.”

This reading helped me get in touch with my inner processes, my loneliness and restlessness, and **most of all, my lack of centeredness.**

- I faithfully join the community pray the Divine Office and Lectio but my mind is obsessed with the tasks I need to do.
- I give lessons on prayer and I compose prayers for various occasions but in truth many times, I am unable to pray.
- During the sharing sessions in the Priory Renewal, I claimed that I have lived the vows of poverty, obedience, and chastity; but I realized later that I still seek to have money at my disposal . . . I still have the gnawing feelings of unfulfilled wants and desires. . .
- And, I realized that a great degree of my vulnerability is in my physical condition: the diminishment of aging, the disability from a progressing scoliosis.

With my examen of consciousness and my honest admission of my vulnerabilities, I feel that what I have written above is like the **CONFESSIONS** of St. Augustine. And, I can make his prayer my prayer:

Late have I known Thee, O Beauty so ancient yet so new.  
Beloved, Thou wert within and I was without.

I was looking for Thee out there.  
I threw myself, deformed as I was, upon these well-formed things  
which Thou hast made.  
Thou wert with me, yet I was not with Thee.  
Thou didst call and cry out and burst in upon my deafness . . .  
Thou didst touch me, and I was inflamed with my desire for Peace!  
- St. Augustine-

### **Advent: A Time for Longing and Yearning for God; a Desire for Peace**

Alfred Delp writes:

Advent is a recurring rhythm in our life.  
At times, it is a result of conversion,  
a new awareness of God, an increase of love.

Advent is a time for rousing. We are shaken to the very depths so that we may wake up to the truth of ourselves. This comes about in various circumstances: sometimes a painful experience of failure or disappointment, or, at times, a misunderstanding with someone, or an inability to achieve what we want to accomplish. The primary condition for a fruitful and rewarding Advent is renunciation of something that we hold on to: a position, the need for recognition of our achievement, or surrender to what God is doing in our lives: a failure in our vowed life, recognition of our diminished physical abilities, health problems or an alarming diagnosis of a sickness.

**Advent is a time for facing our vulnerabilities. It is only when we can admit our weaknesses, our failures, our lack of capacity to love, to care, and to serve can we turn to God and cry for help.** Jean Vanier, speaking from his own experience, wrote:

Our brokenness is the wound  
through which the full power of God can penetrate our being  
and transfigure us in God.

Loneliness is not something from which we must flee  
but the place from which we can cry out to God  
and God will find us and we can find God.

### **Advent: A Time for Prayerful Waiting**

I recall our student days when the sisters taught us to live the spirit of Advent. On the blackboard and bulletin board, we read the words of John the Baptist:

***“Prepare the way of the Lord!”***

Penance, prayer, silence, and some forms of fasting were all expressed by placing a straw in the crib prepared for the Lord. We were encouraged to spend less on food; instead, we dropped a coin in a box near the crib.

One symbol of Advent waiting attracted me: the **Advent Wreath**. As we lighted the candles, we sang, ***“Veni Domine Jesu.”***

As I was doing some research to prepare this Statio Conference, I got hold of a book, *The Advent Sourcebook*. I found an explanation of the origin of the Advent Wreath. Gertrude Mueller Nelson wrote a book on the culture and practices of the Pre-Christian people of the far north who, during the winter time, suffered the loss of light. I am quoting the text in full. (The underlining and the bold printing of some phrases are mine.)

Pre-Christian people who lived far north and who suffered the archetypal loss of life and light with the disappearance of the sun had a way of wooing back life and hope. Primitives do not separate the natural phenomena from their religious and mystical yearning; so nature and mystery remained combined. As the days grew shorter and colder and the sun threatened to abandon the earth, the ancient peoples suffered the sort of guilt and anxiety which we also know. Their solution was to bring all ordinary action and daily routine to a halt. They gave in to the nature of winter, came away from their fields and put away their tools.

**They removed the wheels from their carts and wagons and festooned them with greens and lights and brought them indoors to hang in their halls. They brought the wheels indoors as a sign of different time, a time to stop and turn inward.** They engaged the feelings of cold and fear and loss. Slowly, slowly they wooed the sun-god back. And, light followed darkness. Morning came earlier. The festivals announced the return of hope after primal darkness.

This kind of success ----- hauling the very sun back: **the recovery of hope --- can only be accomplished when we have had the courage to stop and wait engage fully in the winter of our dark longing.** Perhaps the symbolic energy of the wheels made sacred has escaped us and we wish to relegate our Advent Wreaths to the realm of quaint custom or pretty decoration. Symbolism, however, has the power to put us directly in touch with a force or an idea by means of an image or object ---- a “thing” can do that for us. The symbolic action bridges the gulf between knowing and believing. It integrates mind and heart. As we go about the process of clipping the greens and winding them on a hoop, we use our hands, we smell the pungent smell that fills the rooms and we think about our action.

The writer ends by explaining the implication of the meaning of the Advent Wreath in our lives.

Imagine what would happen if we were to understand that ancient prescription for this season literally and remove ----- just one ----- say, just the right front tire from our automobile and use this for our Advent Wreath. Indeed, things would stop. Our daily routine would come to a halt and we would have the leisure to incubate. Having to stay put, we would lose the opportunity to escape or deny our feelings or becoming because our car could not bring us away to the circus.

The season of Advent, then, is an invitation to be quiet and to face the wintry darkness and cold in our hearts. Together with the entire Church, we pray;

Father in heaven  
our hearts desire the warmth of your love  
to increase our longing for Christ  
and to give us strength to grow in love for one another.  
We ask this through Christ our Lord. Amen.

This brings us to the last challenge of Advent: a personal challenge and a challenge to the community.

### **Advent: A Challenge Toward Social and Economic Concern.**

The last section of this conference deals with the challenge preached by John the Baptist as he prepared the people for the coming of the Savior, Jesus Christ. I am using the Gospel according to St. Luke, chapter 3: 1-14.

Luke writes about John's forceful preaching on SOCIAL RESPONSIBILITY. His preaching must have been so powerfully convincing that the listeners asked him, "What shall we do?"

- v. 10 "What should we do, then?" the crowd asked.
- v. 11 John answered, "***The man with two tunics should share with him who has none; and the one who has food should do the same.***"
- v. 12 Tax collectors also came to be baptized and they asked, "Teacher, what should we do?"
- v. 13 John replied, "***Do not collect anymore than you are required to do.***"



**We receive the Eucharistic Body of Christ to be made into His Mystical Body and continue the Mystery of the Incarnation, bringing the LOVE OF GOD to the world that hungers for SALVATION.**

**THE CHALLENGE**

**We are Advent Women charged with a Mission: to proclaim God's love to all the world.** We are blessed with the monastic heritage of coming together to pray the Liturgy of the Hours, where, together with the Church, we bring all the concerns of our people to GOD WHO listens to us and who, in turn, SPEAKS TO US and continue His creative work among us: the MIRABILIA DEI. . . . We are Women of the present moment. We live this very moment with all its imperfections and frustrations, knowing fully well that **CHRIST IS PRESENT AMONG US. By our kindness, compassion and loving Presence, in our Ministry of Prayer and Work, we bring CHRIST'S LOVE TO ALL till the end of time WHEN GOD'S GLORIOUS KINGDOM WILL REIGN OVER ALL.**

\*\*\*\*\*

**Guide for Prayer**

1. Read meditatively Gertrud Muller Nelson's explanation on the origin and meaning of the ADVENT WREATH. What are the implications of this Advent Wreath in your prayer life . . . and in the manner with which you can live the Advent season?
2. As you sit in quiet prayer, **become aware of the inner movement within you: the vulnerabilities in your life that you need to face.**  
**Bring these to the Lord.**

**Guide for Sharing:**

1. Go over the **CHALLENGE OF ADVENT** given to us in St. Luke's account of the preaching of John the Baptist: Luke chapter 3: 1-14

**Social Responsibility: Our care for one another;  
for the people who work with us  
and those who come to us for help.**

**Personal challenge :** How are you challenged as an individual?

**Communal Challenge:** How are we challenged as a community?

2. SUGGESTION: It would be very helpful if you go back to your reflection on the challenge of the vows (especially the vow of poverty) that we prayed over during the Priory-wide Renewal Sessions.

## REFERENCES

- O’Gorman, Thomas J. (editor) The Advent Sourcebook, Liturgy Training Publication, Chicago, 1998
- Houselander, Caryle, A Child in Winter: Advent, Christmas, Epiphany, Sheed and Ward, Wisconsin, 2000
- Craddock, Fred, Interpretation : Bible Commentary for Teaching and Preaching: LUKE, John Knox Press, Kentucky, 1972
- Muto, Susan, Late Have I known Thee: The Recovery of Intimacy, Crossroad New York, 1995
- Maestri, Willaim Rev. A time for Peace: Biblical meditations for Advent, Alba House, New York, 1982
- Fermin, Frederik, O.P. Homilies : Sundays in Advent, 2007

## MIRYAM – WOMAN OF HOPE

CIB Symposium Reflection

Sister Judith Ann Heble, OSB, Moderator

September 8, 2010

(Continuation...)

### THE PRESENTATION (Luke 2:22-40)

When the day came, we then took Jesus up to Jerusalem to present him to the Lord. Since we were not well off, we offered a pair of turtledoves. There was a certain man there named Simeon. He was righteous and devout. Folks said he was awaiting the Messiah, and that the Holy Spirit was upon him. People said that “It had been revealed to him by the holy Spirit that he should not see death before he had seen the Messiah of the Lord.” (Lk. 2:26) When we came into the temple with Jesus to perform the custom of the law in regard to him, Simeon took Jesus “into his arms and blessed God” (Lk.2:28) and whirled around the sanctuary floor, staring at the baby in his arms, chanting over and over, “Blessed are You, O Lord, Our God; Your love endures forever.” (Ps.136:1) He had such a contented look on his face. When he gave Jesus back to me, he said that he could now die, for he had seen salvation with his own eyes. Simeon blessed Joseph, Jesus and me, and said that this child would be destined for the fall and the rise of many in Israel, and that he would be a sign that would be contradicted. Joseph and I were not only amazed at what he said about Jesus, we certainly did not understand the message. Then he came up close to me, and, looking directly into my eyes, he said, “and you, Mary, a sword will pierce.” What was he talking about? I could tell by the serious look on his face that this was not a happy message.

Anna, an elderly prophetess, was also in the temple while we were there. People said that she was a holy woman who never left the temple, but worshiped night and day with fasting and prayer. She came over to us, smiling, toothless, and clasping her hands together, she gave thanks to God. She kept repeating, “Blessed are You, O Lord, Our God; your love endures forever.” (Ps. 136:1) She was a delight and asked to hold my baby. She took Jesus in her arms and hugged and kissed him like a grandmother would do, and waltzed around the temple area with him. Here was this little old lady thrilled to be holding Jesus! After she returned the baby to me, she turned away and approached all the people gathered about the temple area. Turning back and pointing to the child in my arms, she exclaimed, “This is the Messiah”!

When we had fulfilled all of the prescriptions of the law of the Lord, Joseph and I made the long journey back to Galilee, to our home in Nazareth. I kept all these things in my heart, mulling over them, wondering what would become of us. I could only pray,

**“MY SOUL PROCLAIMS THE GREATNESS OF THE LORD;  
MY SPIRIT REJOICES IN GOD, MY SAVIOR!” (Lk.1:46-47)**

Back in Nazareth, Jesus “grew and became strong, filled with wisdom; and the favor of God was upon him.” (Lk. 2:40)

### **THE BOY JESUS IN THE TEMPLE (Luke 2:41-52)**

Joseph and I began to experience an awakening in Jesus to his life’s direction. He was growing up quicker than we would have liked. “When Jesus was twelve years old, about the age when a boy officially reached manhood (celebrated today in the Jewish *bar mitzvah* ceremony),”<sup>1</sup> he did something that surprised us both. We didn’t quite understand what he was up to.

Each year we would go to Jerusalem for the feast of Passover. What a glorious celebration that was! So many of our relatives and friends would attend. It was good to see everyone and to journey together for the feast. It was like a great family reunion. When the festivities were finished, everyone would leave the city. This particular time, we did not know that Jesus had remained behind. We thought that he was in the caravan of our relatives and friends leaving the city.

After about a day’s journey, Joseph and I started to ask around if anyone had seen him. Starting to panic, we returned to Jerusalem to look for him. After three days we found him in the temple, sitting in the midst of the teachers, listening to them and asking them questions. I checked with the teachers of the temple about what was going on. They told me they were

---

<sup>1</sup> Living With Christ, (New London, CT: Bayard Inc.), December, 2009, p. 19-21.

“astounded at the depth of understanding that Jesus’ questions and answers revealed.” “This was not the level of engagement the rabbis typically encountered in one so young.”<sup>2</sup>

When I saw him, I was astonished and ran to him, hugging him with joy and praising God that he had been found. I said to him, “Son, why have you done this to us? Your father and I have been looking for you with great anxiety.” (Lk. 2:48) He responded in a way that I did not expect. “Why were you looking for me? Did you not know that I must be in my Father’s house?” (Lk. 2:49) I did not quite understand what he said to us. Would I ever understand? Was this what Simeon meant when he said to me that a sword would pierce my heart? I could only hope that this would be the worst of what I would have to endure.

Joseph’s and my love for Jesus would have to “make room for him to follow the path that will eventually take him from home and family to his death not far from this same Jerusalem temple.”<sup>3</sup> Joseph and I saw “that Jesus was beginning to move away from the intimate circle of our family toward the greater world.”<sup>4</sup> Yet, he went down with us to Nazareth, “and was obedient.” (Lk. 2:51) I kept all these things in my heart mulling them over and over. That night when I prayed I put my child’s future in God’s hands. There was so much about my son that was mystery. I fell asleep praying,

**“MY SOUL PROCLAIMS THE GREATNESS OF THE LORD;  
MY SPIRIT REJOICES IN GOD MY SAVIOR!” (Lk. 1:46-47)**

### **THE BAPTISM OF JESUS (Luke 3:21-22)**

Zechariah’s and Elizabeth’s son, John, went about the whole region of the Jordan proclaiming a baptism of repentance for the forgiveness of sins. He was a strong and vocal young man. He was not afraid to announce difficult things. People flocked to him to be baptized – even tax collectors came. Many people wondered whether or not John was the Messiah.

I learned that John had also baptized Jesus. “While Jesus did not need baptism (a washing away of sin), Jesus added the presence of the Holy Spirit to the water.”<sup>5</sup> He added action! “According to the prophet Isaiah, ACTION is lighting up the world. ACTION is ridding the world of blindness. ACTION is working to set free so many people caught in their dungeons of selfishness and a lack of vision.”<sup>6</sup>

---

<sup>2</sup> Ibid.

<sup>3</sup> Mueller, Steve, “We are all gifts from God!”, Living With Christ, (New London, CT: Bayard Inc.), December, 2009, p. 163.

<sup>4</sup> Op.Cit., Living With Christ, pp. 19-21.

<sup>5</sup> Franks, Rev. T. Becket A., OSB, “Show Them Where the Rocks Are in the Water!”, Homily given at Sacred Heart Monastery, Lisle, IL, January 10, 2010.

<sup>6</sup> Ibid.

## THE TEMPTATION OF JESUS (Luke 4:1-13)

Jesus returned from the Jordan. I could tell that there was something different about him. He seemed to be filled with the Holy Spirit. He told me that he was being led off into the desert for a retreat to pray and fast for forty days, in the spirit of our ancestors, Moses and Elijah. I hoped that these would be graced days for him. He was getting ready to embark on his own course in life shifting from that of a carpenter's son to his public identity as God's son.<sup>7</sup>

He left for the desert. There was a heaviness in my heart. I wondered, as only a mother could, if he would be alright. The desert can be a formidable place. It is easy to become disoriented and get lost in the desert. There are no landmarks. There is no clear path, just the same rolling hills of sand and brush. Like our ancestors who wandered in the desert for forty years, my son would meet God there and face himself squarely to discern what lay ahead. There, God would speak to him. "When Jesus emerged from the desert, He knew there would be no turning back. He knew what he must do."<sup>8</sup> He later told me that his time in the desert was the "Son of God" test by the devil. "If you are the Son of God...' is how the test goes. 'If you are the Son of God, you will fill your life with things you do not need.' 'If you are the Son of God, you will enslave yourself to power and privilege.' 'If you are the Son of God, you will not understand the human condition and blame every disaster and accident on God.'"<sup>9</sup>

I had taught him well. Formed by the creed and creativity of the Old Testament, Jesus responded to each temptation that beset him.<sup>10</sup> These temptations did not defeat him, but strengthened him to discover exactly where he stood on everything and to defend his deepest values. His choices would reveal who he was to be – and strengthened that identity.<sup>11</sup> This desert experience would highlight the kind of ministry and leadership he would espouse. He would reject a false or easy style of leadership. He would not be someone who offers instant gratification, who seeks all-encompassing political power, or who dazzles his followers with cheap tricks. Instead, he would model compassion, gentleness, humility. He would be a servant-leader.<sup>12</sup> "He will establish a healing reign over sick bodies, tormented psyches, and a troubled cosmos."<sup>13</sup>

## THE MINISTRY IN GALILEE (Luke 4:14-22)

---

<sup>7</sup> Hughes, Mary, OP, LCWR Update, March 2010, p.2.

<sup>8</sup> Ibid.

<sup>9</sup> Franks, Rev. T. Becket A., OSB, "All A Bunch of Lies!", Homily given on February 21, 2010, Sacred Heart Monastery, Lisle, IL.

<sup>10</sup> Holyhead, Verna A., With Burning Hearts, Welcoming the Word in Year C, (Collegeville, MN: Liturgical Press, 2006), p. 29.

<sup>11</sup> Living With Christ, (New London, CT: Bayard Inc.), February, 2010, pp. 18-21.

<sup>12</sup> Higgins, Krystyna, "In Jesus, we pass the test", Living With Christ, (New London, CT: Bayard Inc.), February, 2010, p. 139.

<sup>13</sup> Holyhead, Op. cit., p. 29.

Jesus returned to Galilee and began his ministry. He was about 30 years old.

One Sabbath day, he was on his way to the synagogue. I went along with him and sat in the back with the other women. He stood up to read the Scriptures and was handed the scroll of the prophet Isaiah, which said, “The Spirit or the Lord is upon me, because he has anointed me to bring glad tidings to the poor, to proclaim liberty to captives and recovery of sight to the blind, to let the oppressed go free, and to proclaim a year acceptable to the Lord.” (Lk. 4:18-19) He then said to all gathered there, “Today this scripture passage is fulfilled in your hearing.” (Lk. 4:21) What an amazing moment it was that day in the synagogue when Jesus made that announcement. Many spoke highly of him and were amazed at the gracious words that came from his mouth. Well, not everyone. From the beginning of his ministry, there were those who were suspicious of him and tried to drive him out and even to kill him by throwing him off a cliff.

This was so hard for me to hear. My heart ached within me. I could not understand why some had such hatred for my son. What was going to happen to him? Would his opponents succeed in destroying him? Could this be what Simeon meant when he said that a sword would pierce my heart?

Jesus began to reach out and heal those who were possessed and sick: lepers, the blind and the lame – even raising the dead. He was not afraid to touch people tenderly to relieve their pain, infirmity or sickness. Great crowds came to him. They even placed their sick at his feet, and he cured them. He taught plainly and directly about love. He ministered to women and counted them among his closest friends. He spoke to the people about HOPE in someone greater than themselves. He taught in parables the good news of God’s reign. He welcomed sinners and ate with them. (Lk. 15:2) “The message that Jesus came to proclaim is just that – that God is near at hand, not far away and indifferent to our needs, but in our very midst, healing us and freeing us and loving us.”<sup>14</sup>

One of the things that I will always remember about Jesus was that he loved to pray. I hoped that he had learned that from Joseph and me, for prayer was an important part of our daily family lives. I taught him to always proclaim the greatness of the Lord and to rejoice in God. (Lk. 1:46-47)

## **PREDICTION OF THE PASSION (Luke 9:22)**

---

<sup>14</sup> Lux, Teresa Whalen, “We are God’s hands and feet”, Living With Christ, (New London, CT: Bayard Inc.), January, 2010, p. 143.

Some of my friends began to say that Jesus was talking about suffering greatly and being rejected by the elders, the chief priests, and the scribes. They even said that he spoke of being killed. Rumors were circulating that he also spoke of being raised on the third day. What did he possibly mean?

I kept all of these things in my heart, pondering them frequently. Often I cried myself to sleep at night thinking of what might happen, worrying about his safety. He was gone for a long period of time. I missed him terribly.

### **JESUS' VISIT TO MARY**

Then, one day, Jesus stopped by to see me. I burst into tears with relief and joy when I saw him. We hugged one another for a long time as I held him close to my heart. But, I could tell by the look on his face that he knew his end was near. We spoke of many things and shared many memories. We spoke of his ministry among the people, of his many supporters, of those who hated him. He had an anguished look about him when we spoke of this. I could tell that “he was resolutely determined to journey to Jerusalem.” (Lk. 9:51) Nothing I could say would prevent him from going.

We said good bye to each other. We held each other tightly. There were tears in both of our eyes. And then he left. I turned away and sobbed. Would I ever see him again? With much difficulty I prayed,

**“MY SOUL PROCLAIMS THE GREATNESS OF THE LORD,  
AND MY SPIRIT REJOICES IN GOD MY SAVIOR.” (LK. 1:46-47)**

### **THE LAST PASSOVER (John 11:55-57)**

The Passover was near. This was always a special time for us Jews. Some were wondering if Jesus would go for the feast. In fact, they asked me if I knew.

### **PREPARATIONS FOR THE PASSOVER AND THE LAST SUPPER (Lk. 22: 7-20)**

Jesus was going to celebrate the Passover with his twelve apostles and I would celebrate it with some friends in Jerusalem. One of the disciples later told me that, while they were at table, Jesus changed bread and wine into his body and blood, and asked them do the same in his memory. We would repeat this action every first day of the week when we met together for worship as a community.

### **THE WASHING OF THE DISCIPLES FEET (John 13:1-20)**

Another disciple said that while they were at supper Jesus rose and poured water into a basin and began to wash the disciples' feet and dried them with a towel. . What an example of servant leadership!

### **THE AGONY IN THE GARDEN (Luke 22:39-46)**

After the Passover meal, Jesus and the disciples went out to the Mount of Olives. They told me later that Jesus could be heard, praying, 'Father, if you are willing, take this cup away from me; still, not my will but yours be done.' (Lk. 22:42) My son always kept the Father's will as his priority.

### **THE BETRAYAL AND ARREST OF JESUS (Luke 22:47-65)**

In the morning, I heard that Jesus and his disciples were in the Garden of Olives, so I went there to see for myself. A crowd approached with Judas in the lead. Judas went up to Jesus and kissed him. It was a kiss of betrayal! One of his chosen Twelve, turned Jesus in to the authorities, and Jesus was arrested.

### **JESUS BEFORE THE SANHEDRIN, PILATE AND HEROD (Luke 22:66-71; 23:10-17)**

They brought Jesus before the Sanhedrin and then before Pilate and Herod, where they interrogated him interminably. They brought charges against him for misleading the people, opposing payment of taxes to Caesar, maintaining that he was the Messiah, a king, and inciting the people with his teaching. Neither Pilate nor Herod found Jesus guilty of the accusations against him.

### **THE SENTENCE OF DEATH (Luke 23:18-25)**

All around me I could hear the people angrily shouting, "Away with this man! Release Barabbas to us." (Lk. 23:18) Barabbas was an insurgent and a murderer. My son was neither of these! The people were shouting, "Crucify him! Crucify him!" (LK. 23:21) It was so deafening, that I put my hands over my ears and sobbed! I could not believe that they wanted him crucified. What crime had he committed to deserve such a fate? Finally, Pilate gave in to the angry crowds. He released Barabbas and handed Jesus over to them to do as they wished.

Those who held Jesus in custody were ridiculing him and beating him. They blindfolded him and taunted him. They placed a crown of thorns on his head and beat it into place with clubs. Blood streamed down his face. He was hardly recognizable. I know that they held these kinds of public executions here, but, I had never witnessed anything so horrible firsthand.

They dropped a large, heavy cross on his shoulders and made him carry it, sneering and shoving him through the crowds. The weight of the cross caused Jesus to stumble and fall many times. Every time he fell, the guards would kick him and pull him to his feet and shove him on up the hill.

## **THE WAY OF THE CROSS**

“I had managed to break through the crowd and was walking side by side with my son. I called to him through the shouting voices. He stopped. Our eyes met, mine full of tears of anguish, his full of pain and confusion. I felt helpless; then his eyes said to me, ‘Courage! There is a purpose for this.’ As he stumbled on, I knew he was right. So I followed and prayed silently.”<sup>15</sup>

“Two others, both criminals, were led away with him to be executed.” (Lk. 23:32) Their mothers also watched in horror. At times we walked together, holding on to each other for support as we struggled up the hill.

## **THE CRUCIFIXION (Luke 23:33-43)**

When we arrived at Golgotha, they stripped him of his blood-soaked clothes and nailed him to the cross he had been struggling to carry. I shuttered violently as each nail was pounded into his hands and feet. Then they stood the cross upright, the weight of his body tearing his flesh in the place of the nails. There he hung with the two criminals crucified on either side of him.

I heard Jesus say in a weak and trembling voice, “Father, forgive them, they know not what they do.” (Lk. 23:34) Some people stood by and watched, weeping. Others sneered at him and said, “He saved others; let him save himself if he is the chosen one, the Messiah of God.” (Lk. 23:35) One of the criminals reviled him. The other said, “Jesus, remember me when you come into your kingdom.” (Lk. 23:42) Jesus replied to him, “Today you will be with me in Paradise.” (Lk. 23:43) I wished that I could have died with him as well, and be with him forever in Paradise.

## **THE CRUCIFIXION OF JESUS (John. 19:17-30)**

Pilate had an inscription written and put on the cross. “It read, ‘Jesus the Nazorean, the King of the Jews’”. (Jn.19:19) The soldiers took Jesus’ clothes and divided them among

---

<sup>15</sup> Furley, Richard, G., Mary’s Way of the Cross, (Mystic, CT: Twenty-Third Publications, 1984), Fourth Station.

themselves. They cast lots for his seamless tunic. I wanted to gather up his blood-soaked clothes and take them with me, but I was not allowed to do so.

Several of the women huddled together below the cross. With me were my sister, Mary, the wife of Clopas, my good friend, Mary of Magdala, and the mothers of the other two criminals. When Jesus saw me and the disciple there whom he loved, our friend, John, he said to me in a weak and raspy voice, ‘Woman, behold, your son.’ (Jn. 19:26) “Then he said to the disciple, ‘Behold, your mother.’” (Jn. 19:27) John came over to me and put his arm around me as I sobbed into his chest. “That kind and wonderful young man, John, has made a special place for me in his life now. He has not left me alone in my grief. Being with him is a blessing. But I am also worried for him. I must look for ways to console him”<sup>16</sup> as he consoles me.

### **THE DEATH OF JESUS (Luke 23:44-49)**

It was now about noon and darkness came over the whole land until three in the afternoon. With all the strength he could muster, Jesus cried out in a loud voice, “‘Father, into your hands I commend my spirit.’ When he had said this he breathed his last.” (Lk. 23:46)

“[I] lost my son not to death caused by illness or accident (sorrow enough in itself), but to a cruel and bloody death brought about by public execution. The violence of his death victimized [me] as well, as the mothers of any victims of political violence could attest. [I] suffered the anguish of grief, and of the pain of oppression as occupying soldiers crucified [my] child. [I] was precisely a sorrowful Jewish mother, one who would be in a long line of countless Jewish mothers who had lamented their cruelly murdered Jewish children.”<sup>17</sup>

“What greater pain is there for a mother than to see her son die right before her eyes! I, who had brought [him] into the world and watched him grow, stood helplessly beneath his cross as he lowered his head and died. His earthly anguish was finished, but mine was greater than ever.”<sup>18</sup>

### **THE BURIAL OF JESUS (Luke 23:50-56)**

The crowd dispersed, some crying, some beating their breasts, others stunned by the events they had just witnessed, still others staggered away laughing and cheering as if drunk on what they had schemed.

---

<sup>16</sup> *Living With Christ*, (New London, CT: Bayard Inc.) April 3, Holy Saturday, 2010, p. 109.

<sup>17</sup> Johnson, Elizabeth, “Reconstructing a Theology of Mary”, *Mary, Woman of Nazareth*, Ed. Donnelly, Doris, (Mahwah, NJ: Paulist Press, 1989), p. 83, quoting from Flusser, David in *Mary: Images of the Mother of Jesus in Jewish and Christian Perspective*, with Jaroslav Pelikan and Justin Lang (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1986), pp. 7-16.

<sup>18</sup> Furley, Op. Cit. Station 12.

Joseph of Arimathea, a virtuous and upright man, went to Pilate and asked for the body of Jesus. After he had taken the body of Jesus down from the cross, he placed his lifeless body into my arms. I sobbed as his blood soaked into my clothing. I wanted to hold him closely to my heart one last time. Now I knew. This IS what Simeon meant when he hold me that a sword would pierce my heart. I could barely pray, and yet, I knew I had to,

**“MY SOUL PROCLAIMS THE GREATNESS OF THE LORD;  
MY SPIRIT REJOICES IN GOD, MY SAVIOR!” (Lk. 1:46-47)**

Joseph then wrapped the lifeless body of Jesus in a linen cloth and together we laid him in a rock-hewn tomb in which no one had yet been buried. I arranged the burial cloths carefully. I took one last look at my son, and then walked out. Joseph closed the tomb. I stood by silently, my heart heavy with grief.

I didn't sleep all that night. Visions of what transpired that day were swirling through my mind. That Sabbath day was so eerily quiet. “I don't know that I will ever be able to absorb the horrendous things that have happened. I have never known such pain as I have known these past days. I cannot make sense of what has happened, I pray with all my heart to God, ‘Your will be done in me, merciful and gracious God. Bless me with hope and light and peace as I try to live for your glory and honor!’”<sup>19</sup>

My friends, the passion and death of my son are not the end of the story. On that Sabbath day, I was remembering and hoping as I reflected on what our Prophet Hosea had said, “He will revive us after two days; on the third day he will raise us up, to live in his presence.” (Hosea 6:2)

“Only two days later that emptiness was filled beyond belief – he had risen! [He] had opened the doors to a new life. His undying love would not stop at anything less.”<sup>20</sup> Into my grief and broken heart, and that of the whole world, God brought new and unexpected life. Alleluia! I prayed excitedly,

**“MY SOUL PROCLAIMS THE GREATNESS OF THE LORD;  
MY SPIRIT FINDS JOY IN GOD, MY SAVIOR!” (Lk. 1:46-47)**

### **THE APPEARANCE TO MARY OF MAGDALA (John 20:11-18)**

My friend, Mary of Magdala was the first to see Jesus when she went to the tomb early in the morning, on that first day of the week. “The stone is rolled back and the tomb is empty;

---

<sup>19</sup> Living With Christ, (New London, CT: Bayard Inc), April 3, Holy Saturday, 2010, p. 109.

<sup>20</sup> Furley, *Ibid.*, Fifteenth Station.

resurrected life cannot be contained. Who can comprehend such a paradox? But then, who goes to a tomb expecting to find life? History has been broken open and is now filled with the resurrected presence of Christ.”<sup>21</sup>

Mary of Magdala ran to tell the disciples. He appeared to them, too, and opened their minds to understand the scriptures. Even Thomas finally saw and believed! The Spirit was moving in wild and wonderful ways. As word got around that Jesus had risen, an energy and excitement about the news spread throughout Jerusalem and Galilee. As hearts burned, the disciples caught on fire fueled by the Spirit! Nothing could stop them from proclaiming the Good News: “Jesus is in our midst: holding out to us the wounds of his risen body, breakfasting with and befriending those [of us] who had deserted him; calling us by name to follow him as our Shepherd Protector; lingering long with us at the table as the Host who gives us, his friends, the love commandment; promising us the gifts of the Spirit, the memory and future of the Church, breathing into the chaos of our lives his own peace that the world cannot give. Then, ascended to his Father, Jesus sends upon [us] the wind and fire of Pentecost that shakes [us] into the world with burning urgency to proclaim to the ends of the earth that Christ is risen, he is truly risen.”<sup>22</sup>

My friends, do not be afraid. Never lose hope! From now until Jesus comes again, the Spirit will companion you. “[You] are not orphans. [You] are not wanderers anymore. [You] are not left to wonder now about what is really [your] fate. You already know it. You have already seen it among [you]. There is nothing to wait for now except for the waiting to be over. It is a matter only of allowing the Spirit to transform [you] so that [your] life and the life of Christ do finally merge, do really melt into one another, do truly become one, are united both here and hereafter. Sing ‘Alleluia’ – ‘Praise the Lord’ – over and over and over again. It is a time of unbounded assurance and a sense of limitless liberation. It is hope and faith and trust all bound into one in [you].”<sup>23</sup>

My dear Benedictine women, be witnesses of HOPE wherever you are. “Speak the word of God with boldness.” (Acts 4:31) “Go into the whole world and proclaim the Gospel to every creature.” (Mk. 16:15) Go! Tell everyone you meet about my son, Jesus, the Christ, and, when you do, remember me, your Mother, a WOMAN OF HOPE!

**“MY SOUL PROCLAIMS THE GREATNESS OF THE LORD;  
MY SPIRIT FINDS REJOICES IN GOD MY SAVIOR!” (Lk. 1:46-47)**

---

<sup>21</sup> Bergant, Diane, with Fragomeni, Richard, Preaching the New Lectionary, Year C, (Collegeville, MN: The Liturgical Press, 2000), p. 168.

<sup>22</sup> Holyhead, Op.Cit., p. 59.

<sup>23</sup> Chittister, Joan, The Liturgical Year, (Nashville, TN: Thomas Nelson, 2009), p. 174-176.

## BIBLIOGRAPHY

- Bergant, Diane, with Fragomeni, Richard, Preaching the New Lectionary, Year C, (Collegeville, MN: The Liturgical Press, 2000).
- Bowe, Barbara, RSCJ, “The Portrait and Character of Jesus in the Lukan Passion Narrative, The Bible Today, (Collegeville, MN: Liturgical Press, Saint John’s Abbey), March/April, 2010.
- Chittister, Joan, The Friendship of Women, A Spiritual Tradition, (Erie, PA: Benetvision, 2000).  
Chittister, Joan, The Liturgical Year, (Nashville, TN: Thomas Nelson, 2009).
- Eckes, Lois, Pathways, Newsletter of the Duluth Benedictines, Vol. 2, No. 2, Advent, 2009, p.2.
- Franks, Rev. T. Becket A., OSB, “Show Them Where the Rocks Are in the Water!” Homily given at Sacred Heart Monastery, Lisle, IL, January 10, 2010.
- Franks, Rev. T. Becket, A., OSB, “All A Bunch of Lies!” Homily given at Sacred Heart Monastery, Lisle, IL, February 21, 2010.
- Furley, Richard G., Mary’s Way of the Cross, (Mystic, CT: Twenty-Third Publications, 1984).
- Higgins, Krystyna, “In Jesus, we pass the test”, Living With Christ, (New London, CT: Bayard Inc), February, 2010.
- Holyhead, Verna A., With Burning Hearts, Welcoming the Word in Year C, (Collegeville, MN: Liturgical Press, 2006).
- Hughes, Mary, OP, LCWR Update – December 2009, March 2010.
- Jones, Gloria Marie, O.P., The Occasional Papers, “Elijah: Follow God No Matter What”, (Silver Spring, MD: Leadership Conference of Women Religious), Vol. 37, #2, Summer, 2008.
- Johnson, Ann, Miryam of Jerusalem, Teacher of the Disciples, (Notre Dame, IN: Ave Maria Press, Inc., 1991).
- Johnson, Ann, Miryam of Judah, Witness in Truth & Tradition, (Notre Dame, IN: Ave Maria Press, Inc., 1987).
- Johnson, Ann, Miryam of Nazareth, Woman of Strength & Wisdom, (Notre Dame, IN: Ave Maria Press, Inc., 1984, revised in 2005).

Johnson, Elizabeth, “Reconstructing a Theology of Mary, Mary, Woman of Nazareth, , Donnelly, Doris, Edit. (New York, NY: Paulist Press, 1989).

Living With Christ, (New London, CT: Bayard Inc.) December, 2009, 2010, Holy Week, 2010.

Lux, Teresa Whalen, “We are God’s hands and feet”, Living With Christ, (New London, CT: Bayard Inc), January, 2010.

Mueller, Steve, “We are all gifts from God!”, Living With Christ, (New London, CT: Bayard Inc.), December, 2009.

Osiek, Carolyn, RSCJ, “Accusers, Mourners, Disciples: The Women of Luke’s Passion Narrative”, The Bible Today, (Collegeville, MN: Liturgical Press, Saint John’s Abbey), March/April, 2010.

Pope Benedict XVI, Mary, Spiritual Thought Series, (Washington, D.C.: United States Conference of Catholic Bishops, 2008).

Pope Benedict XVI, On Christian Hope, *Spe Salvi*, (Washington, D.C.: United States Conference of Catholic Bishops, 2007).

Romero, Mary Jane, O.S.B., Spirit&Life, “The Most Joyful of the Joyful Mysteries”, (Tucson, AZ: Benedictine Sisters of Perpetual Adoration), Vol. 105:1, May-June, 2009.

Stuhmueller, Carroll, C.P., Biblical Meditations for Advent and the Christmas Season, (New York: Paulist Press, 1980).

The Catholic Study Bible, New American Bible(New York, NY, Oxford University Press, Inc., 1990).

Wright, Wendy, Weavings, A Journal of the Christian Spiritual Life, “Circles of Sorrow”, (Nashville, TN: The Upper Room), Vol. XXV, #1.