

Funeral for Mary McCann, IHM
June 29, 2023
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The readings chosen for today are both an invitation to us and a call for us to reflect on the life and ministry of Mary McCann, IHM. Mary reminded us that the Gospel is a living word – we are challenged to not only hear the word of God but live the word. By her life, Mary believed that to the core of her being and expressed that Article 16 of the *IHM Constitutions* is key to our call as IHMs. “In all we do to respond to the needs of God’s people and to proclaim the reign of God, we rely on the strength and inspiration of the Holy Spirit. For this reason, we dare to speak God’s word with boldness and to risk deeds that our own hearts could never dream. (*IHM Constitutions*, Article 16).”

If we look at the verses in the text proceeding the reading from Micah, there are questions that reconcile the relationship between the people and God. These include questions regarding the sacrifice of the first born, and people coming to the realization that God no longer requires a sacrifice. Very simply, God wants us “to do right and love goodness, and to walk humbly with [our] God.” Today we celebrate Mary’s freedom from the diminishment of her cognitive abilities and the echo of her spirit inviting us to live the words of the prophet Micah as so many other sisters did. Mary professed her first and final vows on this day, June 29. The reading from two Timothy was the reading for this day. While it speaks to the fact that the end is near, scripture scholars say that there are converging metaphors that could be used for this reading. One such metaphor is a nautical one. At the time of departure, a ship can leave once the rope is pulled in. For Mary, as well as members of her class, first profession was the time when the rope was

pulled in and the call to these women was to live the liberating mission of Jesus as they embarked on mission. The time of final vows was a time to set sail with a life commitment with the hope and promise of life in Christ Jesus. For Mary, this led to her ministry of education, teaching, spiritual direction, and leadership.

One aspect articulated by the Leadership Council who served with Mary was their leadership was all about mission. In fact, that was the central point of a graphic that described the various aspects of mission and their leadership. Mary was attentive to welcoming the ways people were called to join the IHM mission. Mary had a deep sense of mission, finely attentive to the forces of life and liberation at work in our world. She challenged all of us to reflect on why, how and with whom we share the IHM mission for it reveals our vision and our understanding of mission.

Central to our IHM life, as it was in Mary's, is our Gospel reading for today. The Holy Spirit prepared Jesus to be the anointed one, the Messiah, serving as teacher. In referencing Isaiah, Jesus, in his inaugural address, sets forth his mission and calls us to do the same. In one of Mary's writings, she wonders who are the poor, the captives, the blind and those in prison? As I reflected on this, I would imagine that Mary would identify migrants, members of the LGBTQ+ community, those affected by climate change and racism. Jesus closes his address with the words, "Today, in your hearing, this scripture passage is fulfilled." Mary lived this scripture from the time she took a stance as principal of Christ the King school to when she led us to recognize that our roots are with Theresa Maxis. Often at the OSP/IHM Governing Board meetings, someone recalls Mary embracing Sr. Mary Claudina and walking together into Avila Dining Room where they received a standing ovation. Mary was convinced that our call was to deepen our

relationships with the Oblate Sisters of Providence, and together with the Scranton and Philadelphia IHMs to explore what God is inviting us to do through our shared sisterhood.

In Mary's reflection on her leadership in July 1999, she shared that she was never a strong leader type – that was just not in her genes or capacities - and she did not feel that this type of leadership would serve the congregation well at that time. She believed that the quality of interaction among the team would hone a shared vision and would invite the congregation to join in a collaborative mode with a commitment to sustained interaction and to engage in the work of transformation. Those who served with Mary affirmed this leadership style as they described her work as mutual and leading the team to trust in one another's gifts. She was an attentive listener with mind and heart open. Mary exhibited a calm, kind, thoughtful and even-handedness in her leadership.

Together we join with the words of the psalmist as we sing a joyful song to all the earth and praise Love's name. We recognize how magnificent are God's ways as we celebrate the life of Mary McCann – educator, principal, teacher, spiritual director, and congregational leader. Through Mary's life, we see what the Beloved has done, and how wonderful are the deeds of Love, lived in and through Mary's life, which has touched each of our lives in so many ways.