

Reflection

Betty Leon, IHM

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Jane Aseltyne final vows

We are here to confirm cherished beliefs and values. Yet we are coming from a world and society that supports behaviors of self-centeredness, greed, slander, consumerism and a devaluing of the earth and its resources. We propose an alternative that is challenging and life-giving.

To go forward, we need the grace of assurance offered in today's scriptures. They lead us to a deeper understanding of the lifelong commitment to poverty, chastity and obedience in the vows we dare to take.

In the Exodus story, creator God teaches the people many times, over many years to trust, to believe in and to rely on the one who called them into being. God assures them, I am the one who now sustains you through every step of this journey.

For us, such reliance on God is activated in our vow of poverty. Certainly, we live it by our simplicity of life in using material things, and in our reverence for all of creation. More interiorly we also accept the poverty of our personal limitations and the responsibility for using our gifts and talents in service to others and for the common good. In our poverty the blessing of freedom to service is confirmed, yet we are not asked to do it alone. Jesus calls us into community.

The Colossians reading is so rich in naming the virtues needed for community life with all its highs and lows its challenges and blessings. We hear as Jesus did, "you are God's chosen ones, holy and beloved."

With that foundation we receive our call to the vow of celibacy lived in the context of community life. We can bravely hear the guidance to follow and clothe yourself with heartfelt mercy, humility, bear with one another, forgive one another and over all these love each other.

Yes, the vow is to be celibate and committed to community life and service. It asks us to clarify all our relationships in light of this commitment.

Our deepest love is given to the incarnate Christ, whose heart was broken yet who loves inclusively, deeply and faithfully.

Colossians and the Gospel call us to reflect on our vow of obedience. The presence and action of the Holy Spirit is integral to our living of this vow.

"Let the word of Christ dwell in you. In wisdom made perfect, instruct and admonish one another. Whatever you do whether in speech or in action, do it in the name of the Lord Jesus."

Through this vow we commit to fidelity in conducting the directives of the congregation. We are to be especially attentive to the call and direction of the holy spirit as revealed in Holy Scripture, discern in our own heart, in prayer and in life events and circumstances. We ask with the crowd, "what can we do to accomplish the works of God?" The Gospel assurance is strong. Believe in the one who was sent. And in the spirit who is given. Remember, you are nourished by the word in the bread broken for you and in the wine of love poured out for you and for all.

Earlier Jane, you said that coming to this point felt big, Yes, it is. Recently a woman was like you, at a point of a decision about the future direction of her life. Her director simply remarked, "well you're just jumping off a cliff." Will I crash or fly?

This is the moment. It is like Alphonsus placing his sword at the feet of Mary or Claire joining Francis and the symbolic cutting of her hair. It is Theresa coming from Baltimore to Monroe. You carry the wisdom from the long history of those who have lived this life.

Jane,

You are coming to the edge. Embrace the gifts offered by your creator, Christ and spirit, claim the nourishment and strength for the adventure before you. Step off the edge and fly.