

Foundation Day 2015

Have you ever thought about what kind of day it may have been? Do you think it was a day like today, sunny, bright and warm... that day when three young Sisters stepped out of St. Joseph Convent in St. Mary's PA, to begin, yet again, a new life...

Clickety-clack, clickety-clack...the sound of horses' hooves pulling a stage coach along the dusty road which is now Route 219. Inside among their meager possessions sat three young women, Sisters Adelgunda Feldman, Benedicta McGill and Mary Glenn... who were being sent to Johnstown, PA, to teach the children of German immigrants there.

I doubt that they were thinking of us who are their heirs...I wonder what they were thinking...and praying about...did they worry about the trip to an unknown town? Were they already missing the sisters they were leaving behind? Did they realize that what they were about to do would change their little corner of the world?

Four hundred and ninety-five of us have begun similar journeys of seeking God,...wondering, praying, changing our little corners of the world. Each woman who crossed

the threshold of any of our motherhouses or monasteries have had an impact on who we are today. And today, on the celebration of our 145th anniversary of the foundation of our community we are honoring the gifts of sixteen of our current members, who have lived vibrant lives totaling fourteen hundred and eighty-nine years and eleven hundred seventeen years of Benedictine profession!

Imagine the lives these sixteen women have touched, imagine the hours of prayer each one celebrated, imagine the years of community life they have lived as they interacted with each of us during our years in the community.

As I read and typed each “gift” that described our octogenarians and nonagenarians which these sixteen sisters received today I could not help but be touched and simply respond, “Of course, how beautiful, what a special woman!” What great examples these women are to each of us and for that and in the name of the community, I say again, Thank you!

The story of the community is theirs and all of ours put together. The life of our community hinges on our community life. This is our life on days of celebration

and on days of sadness and on all the days in between...In Bakerstown, in Perrysville, in Lucinda and in Waynesburg and wherever the soles of our feet touch the ground. What we do and the energy we expend and the love that underlies it all is what weaves the fabric of community, no matter where we are.

Joan Chittester notes that community is a matter of the heart and the mind. It cannot be created by place alone, and it cannot be destroyed by distance alone. It is the essence of the soul. Community is the backdrop against which we do what we do....As the world enlarges, so does the concept of community. Now, in the 21st century, community is often virtual, but just as real in many dimensions as sitting next to the same person in chapel our entire lives. What is central, and for a community, our community, is that we use our goods and our gifts for something greater than ourselves. And as Carol Zinn, CSJ, reminds us, "it's not about us."

We often hear the phrase "community building." I would like to use the words of Dorothy Day in reference to community building. She once said that we must lay one brick at a time, take one step at a time; we can be responsible only for the action of the present moment but we can beg for an increase of love in our hearts that

will vitalize and transform all our individual actions, and know that God will take them and multiply them, as Jesus multiplied the loaves and fishes.

The greatest challenge of our day is: how to bring about a revolution of the heart, a revolution which has to start with each one of us? When we begin to take the lowest place, to wash the feet of others, to love one another with that burning love, that passion, which led to the cross, then we can truly say, 'Now I have begun.'

And as we celebrate our 145th anniversary of foundation, my prayer is that each of us may continue to lay our one brick each moment of each day in our quest for seeking God in and through this Benedictine community:
UIOGD...THAT IN ALL THINGS, GOD MAY BE GLORIFIED.