

FOUNDRESSES DAY HOMILY - April 28, 2021

Happy Foundresses Day! What a beautiful time in the church year for us to celebrate the birth of our congregation. During Eastertime we read in the Book of Acts that the word of God continued to spread and grow. Today we hear that the Holy Spirit called and set apart Barnabas and Saul for the mission of proclaiming the word of God in the Jewish synagogues.

The Word of God. The Word of God is Jesus resurrected, God-with-us in the world. In John's Gospel Jesus says:

Whoever believes in me believes not only in me but also in the one who sent me, and whoever sees me sees the one who sent me. I came into the world as **light**, so that everyone who believes in me might not remain in darkness.

Following the light and trusting in the light, Barnabas and Saul were sent to found early Christian communities. They proclaimed the Word of God, Jesus resurrected, God Incarnate in the world. This is the Good News our foundresses proclaimed with their lives and we continue to proclaim with our lives.

In *Gaudete et Exultate*, a call to holiness in today's world, Pope Francis said:

Each saint is a mission, planned by [God] to reflect and embody, at a specific moment in history, a certain aspect of the Gospel.

As I reflected on that sentence, I thought about our foundresses, but I also thought about my own life's calling and our calling as a congregation.

Each one of us is a mission, inspired by God, to reflect and embody, at this specific moment in history, a certain aspect of the Gospel—and the same is true of us as a congregation.

We know how our foundresses embraced God's mission in their lives. What is the mission God is inspiring in my life now? What is God inviting me to reflect and embody? And, what about **Us** as a congregation?

On this day, April 28th, we remember the women who opened their hearts to God wide and deep enough to leave their homeland and launch themselves into the unknown, trusting in God to make of their lives a mission. With precious little extra cash sewn into the fold of the hem of their clothing, they set sail for the United States, unsure of how and where God would carry them. In God's time and with God's guidance, they founded their first mission at New Cassel, Wisconsin, dedicating themselves first in service of other German immigrants to the United States, and they expanded the missions as they saw new needs calling them to respond.

This day we cherish them in loving memory, and we are grateful for the witness of their lives. At the same time, we are being invited to cherish our own calling as School Sisters of St. Francis— to be conscious of what that calling means for us in our day-to-day living, what conversion it asks of us. For example, do we have that same deep trust in God's providence that they had, to face the uncertainties and insecurities of our time?

As a congregation, we are preparing for our next General Assembly—that sacred time in which we remember who we are and what we are called to be about in this ever-changing

world. Each one of us is invited to be part of that assembly. We have shared with one another our stories of weaving together our hearts for intercultural life and mission, and our stories of how we are witnesses to God's love in the world, the theme of our 2022 General Assembly. They are stories of opening our heart to another person, extending a healing touch, giving of our time. They are stories of conversion—of becoming inclusive when we want to be exclusive; of forgetting ourselves because of the need of another.

Like our founding sisters, Alexia, Alfons, and Clara, we speak with our lives—we reflect and embody the Good News of Jesus, responding to the needs of people and of the planet as best we can—because this is God's will for us—now and always. The stories of our foundresses still touch us, but the stories **we tell** about our own lives also inspire us, and we will share the congregational stories with the General Assembly and all of you.

In these next months, we are invited to participate in the discernment of sisters for the next International Leadership Team. Before nominating sisters, we will reflect on the question:

As we look at the urgent needs in our world and we think about witnessing God's love in the world, what are we called to BE and DO over the next four years?

The urgent needs in our world are challenging—the pandemic everywhere, especially right now in India; systems that maintain a division between haves and have nots, systemic racism and white privilege in the United States; people who are suffering and do not experience God's love in their lives.

We remember Mother Alexia's words: What is necessary for the times is God's will for us. We look at the urgent needs of our times, and ask: How do we witness to God's love? What are we called to BE and DO?

Our congregation is a mission, planned by God to reflect and embody, at a specific moment in history, a certain aspect of the Gospel. What are we called to BE and DO **now**? We are invited to respond to this question and participate in shaping God's mission for our congregation, the way we will be a witness to God's love in the world.

We are living in the **light** of the Easter season. This light helps us envision how we can go forward in a lifegiving way, even though we do not know what is ahead. What gives us hope and assurance is knowing that we have the light of our faith, our relationship with Jesus, and our sisters. When the moment is right, we will be ready to be sent.

--Sister Barbara Kraemer