

## Reflection for Dianne's Life Commitment

“For surely I know the plans I have for you, declares the Lord, plans for your wellbeing and not for harm, plans to give you a future filled with hope.”

We know these words well. As our lives progress, we get hints and flickers of awareness about God's plans for us and how they unfold. But we are not handed the Divine Blueprint for our lives and the timing, shape and direction of God's plan to give us a future full of hope is Spirit-led.

As for all of us, Dianne's journey of consecration and her vocation began at her Baptism. The vows she takes today do not add to, elevate or replace her Baptismal commitment; but they do specify it.

Religious life has an identity that makes it different from the call of others who wish to live the Gospel. Religious Life is an uncommon calling but no more or less important than any other calling to live as a committed disciple. I like Judith Merkl's image:

“When we hear a new pianist play Bach, what makes them different from all those who have played Bach before? Each has a different touch!”

In the Christian life vowed religious simply play their discipleship and consecration with a different touch. Their call, their Profession is to make the religious dimension of their lives-uniquely important and central-so much so, that no other life commitment is possible for them.

Di has chosen a Gospel passage. Jesus seems to be making unrealistic claims-telling us not to worry about our lives and what we are to eat, or about our bodies and what we are to wear. He uses poetic images at which most 'feet on the ground' people would very likely scoff. Scripture scholars tell us that Semitic people enjoyed this kind of sweeping rhetoric and exaggeration. It provoked thought and conversation. Jesus used it so that people would find the nugget of gold, the solid core of truth in his message. Jesus is declaring we are to love God as a loving, providing Parent – not simply as a donor or benefactor. Once we have found ourselves within this relationship of love and trust, we need not worry.

This Gospel passage is laden with images that relate to the vows Di takes today.

Jesus' words and the vow of Poverty call us to live simply and sustainably in solidarity with the poor and Earth. The Vow of Obedience assures us that if we listen to God together we can make life more fertile, more mutual and more empowering for all Earth's creatures. Celibacy calls us to kinship, generativity and interconnectedness with the Divine in all living beings.

Today's gospel gives us a powerful way to think differently about what really matters, what degree of radical abandonment is necessary. *Seek first God's kingdom and God's saving justice, and all these things will be given to you besides.*

Everyone's journey into religious life has its own narrative. Without doubt Dianne's approach has been highly original. By way of analogy, let me tell you this story:

Years ago, we had a Sister Tess who was living here at Kensington and who had a unique sense of direction. She was asked to go to the Adelaide Railway station to meet Sister Molly who was arriving on the Melbourne Express. Pleased to be met, Molly asked Tess how long it took her to get to the station. “Only 10 minutes”, said Tess. Relief for Molly! The drive home would be short. However, the drive home seemed to Molly to go way beyond 10 minutes. She peeked at her watch and saw they had been

travelling for forty minutes. She brought the matter up with Tess who then realised that they were in fact just entering Morphett Vale! Kensington via Morphett Vale took some explaining by Tess.<sup>1</sup>

So, what's the analogy? Unknown to some, a very young Dianne Colborne came to the Congregation and lived with us as a Postulant. She stayed a short while, and then, no doubt nudged by the Spirit, she left that particular station and resumed her normal life as a student. With 20/20 vision we can safely say that the charism and spirit of that initial attraction never faded. However, the journey to full admission to Josephite life we might say came 'via Morphett Vale'. However, the destination was always in sight.

In the early 70s I was looking for a year-five-class teacher! Di, now a fully qualified teacher, came for an interview and in a heart-beat she was employed. Some might call it coincidence, but it has always felt more like Providence to me. I remember coming home to Kensington after a hard day's ministry at St John's and remarking to my friends that with Di there it was like having another Sister on the staff.

What was I seeing, sensing, intuiting? There were energies alive in Di even then that resonated deeply with our Josephite charism. And these continued on through her years in education, School Leadership and then Pastoral ministry in our Adelaide Archdiocese.

According to the needs of her life at a particular time, Di chose any available means to stay close to and identify with the Josephite charism and spirit. As soon as it was made possible by the Chapter, she committed herself to the Covenant Pathway. However, God's plans for her kept unfolding, beckoning, seeking a new expression and she made known to us that she deeply desired Membership as a Sister of St Joseph

These words from Jeremiah "...surely, I know the plans I have for you, plans for your wellbeing and not for harm, plans to give you a future filled with hope," are expressed a little differently by the poet William Stafford:

There's a thread you follow. It goes among  
things that change. But it doesn't change. People  
wonder about what you are pursuing. You have to  
explain about the thread.

But it is hard for others to see.

While you hold it you can't get lost. Tragedies  
happen; people get hurt or die; and you suffer  
and get older.

Nothing you do can stop time's unfolding. You don't  
ever let go of the thread.

~ William Stafford ~"

We rejoice and give thanks today because Dianne has never let go of that thread!

Genevieve Ryan rsj

---

<sup>1</sup> This was a noteworthy event because in order to reach Morphett Vale Tess had driven some thirty kilometres to the south of the station while Kensington was a comparatively short distance to its east.