



VOCATION VIBES

Volume 2 #1

**Called, Vowed, Committed
Belonging in a New Generation
National Religious Vocation Conference
2006 Convocation**

This past September I had the privilege of traveling to California to attend the National Religious Vocation Conference. It was here that I met not only our Dominican Sisters and Brothers but also over 450 Sisters, priests, brothers, women and men (both single and married) who serve as Vocation Directors, Ministers and / or Promoters.

Prior to the conference, I had read many interesting articles in Horizon magazine, which focused on this year's topic of being Called, Vowed and Committed in a new generation. My expectation of the conference was that it would expand my understanding and that the keynote speakers would provide insights on what we might expect for the future of religious life. I also hoped to find answers to the questions below that had been resonating within me.

*What does it take for each member to attract and sustain new members?
Who are young adults today? What are they saying about religious life and our Church?
What signs of hope do we see regarding the future of religious life?
Which communities are attracting new members and why?*

The keynote speakers were Fr. Ronald Rolheiser, OMI and Sr. Laurie Brink, OP. They each shared their thoughts about religious life both from their perspectives as vowed members and from the perspectives of young adults discerning their call to religious life.

Fr. Rolheiser challenged us to reflect on Jesus' invitation. "We are living in a western culture society whose lives are opportunity and freedom laden," he said, "How then," he asked, "do we live counter culturally and share with others the invitation that Jesus gave us?"

Freedom is a gift from God that should never be denigrated but should be shared with others. Fr. Rolheiser advised us to incarnate the maturity of Jesus and walk fearlessly and responsibly in places otherwise not visited. We must be persons deeply founded in Jesus Christ. We must become the mystic and be a witness to others. The society in which we live is both Christian and non-Christian. We must recognize and address immorality in all its forms and reintroduce God to a society where God may not be a "survivor."

Through the use of Sacred Scripture, Fr. Rolheiser highlighted the issues women religious need to address as individuals, local communities and as congregations if we are to encourage others to embrace the call to religious life.

In John's Gospel account of the Wedding Feast at Cana, the Mother of Jesus is portrayed as someone with authority. We were asked to reflect on Mary's statement, "They have no wine." For the couple being joined in marriage, this meant that there was no joy, no song, no dance and no celebration. Jesus' response to His Mother's statement was startling, "What is that to me, my hour has not come." Reluctantly, Jesus takes the water of purification and transforms it into wine. How often do we find ourselves unsure, reluctant and questioning the amount and quality of wine in our lives?

The Rich Young Man in Luke's Gospel questions his possession of eternal life. Lovingly Jesus looks at the young man and tells him that in order to receive, not possess eternal life; one must give all, not just a portion of themselves. We were left to reflect on the young man's sad departure. We look again to our own lives. Can we honestly hear "Come and follow me" or say, "Come and look at us" if we are not giving ALL to God? There are times when the things we least expect to give to God are just what God wants: our trust, our worries, our doubts, and our fears.

The images of water and fire are significant in The Baptism of John and the Baptism of Jesus. The water in John's baptism washes and purifies but does not change. The fire in Jesus' baptism transforms. The image of both baptisms leaves us to question what needs to be transformed in our lives, society and congregations and what enflames our passions for others to follow in our path.

The Easter Resurrection event in John's Gospel asks "What and Who are you looking for?" Simply, Jesus tells us that God is the Way, the Truth and the Life. If we, like Mary Magdalen, can allow ourselves to be open to hear our names called, we will hear God's voice saying, "I love you."

Sister Laurie Brink, Dominican Sister from Sinsinawa, brought with her the wealth and knowledge she has gained by speaking and ministering to young adults. Through the Book of Ruth, Laurie relayed a message to us from these young adults that they would knock on our doors if we could truthfully answer YES to the following questions:

Are we joyful women?

Do we let people know that we love our lives?

Can we accept their faith as it has been formed and the rituals that sustain them?

Can we accept young adults and their culture, not just the culture with which we are familiar, so that together might we become a viable community?"

These questions are challenging and echo the challenges of Fr. Rolheiser. We must rekindle the romance of our own journeys, of our congregations and give reasons for others to fall in love with who we are. We must exhibit lives that personify passion, compassion and commitment. We must call out to others with a Christ-like authority that they are welcome to come and follow us. Finally, we must give of ourselves to those who are searching for a God who calls them by name.

Please continue to pray for women who are discerning their call and response to God.

In God's Love,

Sr. Kathleen Logan

Promoter of Dominican Life and Vocations