

Thank you to Sr. Carolyn Wolfbauer for sharing her reflections with all of us. Carolyn preached at the liturgy held at St. Francis Assisi Church in Rockland County honoring World Day for Consecrated Life.

In 1997 Pope John Paul II instituted this World Day for Consecrated Life—in his words: “to help the entire Church esteem ever more greatly the witness of those persons who have chosen to follow Christ by means of the practice of the evangelical counsels and, at the same time, is intended to be a suitable occasion for consecrated persons to renew their commitment and rekindle the fervor which should inspire their offering of themselves to the Lord.”

This year Archbishop Robert Carlson, Chairman of the U S Bishops’ committee on clergy, consecrated life and vocations, said, “We thank God for the service of many consecrated men and women who work in parishes, schools, universities, chanceries, hospitals, centers of social service, counseling and spiritual direction. So often, these men and women transform human need through their prayerful witness of the love of Christ by educating the unlearned, healing the sick, comforting the sorrowful, befriending the lonely. Their zeal and joy for doing God’s will manifests the life and holiness of the Church.”

The group of women and men religious here today have actively chosen to become members of their respective congregations and orders—committed to a common life focus and a common mission of proclaiming the good news of God’s love and forgiveness.

The recent words of Srs. Lynn Jarrel and Rose Fernando:

Living out our vows requires of us detachment from the use of power for our own gain and the emptying out of ourself to be free to say YES to God.

They require us to be grounded in a life of relationship with God and all of creation, to live with an undivided heart; to develop a life of listening, to be available, to choose freely, to be open to change, and be able to let go.

But our consecrated life is not for us to keep for ourselves. It is relational. It is for others. It is to be in right relationship with others.

Poverty is having the right relationships with God, people, creation, and material goods—to act justly. Chastity is developing inclusion and equality—to give life to others—to forgive and be forgiven, to reconcile, to love tenderly. Obedience is to let go and to let God be God in our life.—to make discernment a way of life—to walk humbly with our God.

These are the lifelong challenges of consecrated life—and they are the blessings.

Although today is a special day of celebration, we are also in the Ordinary Time of the Church's year—the time when we are between the celebration of Christmas and the penitential season of Lent.

Ordinary Time is a time of teaching—where we learn what Christ asks of us—all of us. All of us in this church are called to be disciples by virtue of the sacrament of our Baptism. So what are we to learn about discipleship in the scriptures this week?

In Isaiah we heard: Share what you have—and your light will break forth. Call on the Lord for help—and you will receive help.

In the Psalm: Light shines through the darkness. The just one shall be in everlasting remembrance.

From Paul: I came to you in weakness and fear and much trembling—and my message was a demonstration of Spirit and power

And then in Matthew: You are the light of the world. Your light must shine before others that they may see your good deeds and glorify God.

Are you hearing the theme of light and shining?? Of being afraid? Of going out to others?

God has put each one of us on earth to be someone and to do something. That applies to all of us. Vatican Council II reminded us that we are all in this mission together and Christ needs all of us to be his hands and feet and voice in the world—whatever part of the world we live and work in.

And we hear in the gospel--Your light **MUST** shine before others. **WHY**—so they may see your good deeds and glorify God.

Last week in the scriptures we were warned against false pride. This week we are warned against false modesty. It isn't OUR light that does the shining.

God is the light—God shines on us and we reflect that light to others.

We don't create the light by good deeds, we reflect God's goodness. It isn't us—it is God working through us.

There is a story that a British photographer who was working in India took some pictures of Mother Teresa—when he developed the photographs there was a glow around her.

Yesterday in our congregation we buried a sister who was a light in our congregation and a light to all with whom she ministered. She was not self promoting. She just lived her life as Jesus did seeing the needs around her and responding to them. The memories recalled by others are a testimony to the good that comes to this earth when we can reflect the light of God's love to others.

God has called us to the vocation we have—all of us—consecrated, married, single, priesthood.

We have the obligation to live our faith, act on our faith and be a witness of the love God has for every person on our earth. How shall we do this?

It is all here in today's scriptures:

From Isaiah: If you remove from your midst oppression, false accusation and malicious speech: If you bestow your bread on the hungry and satisfy the afflicted; Then light shall rise for you in the darkness and the gloom shall become for you like midday. May we have the grace to make it so.

Sr. Carolyn Wolfbauer

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