

FEAST OF THE SACRED HEART

JUNE 23, 2017

Happy Feast! Happy beginning of the Bicentennial Celebration:

As Kathleen has just reminded us, Philippine and her companions landed in the New World on this feast! Imagine their relief. Imagine their fears. Imagine their joy! In honor of that auspicious moment, we begin the United States-Canada Province's celebration of the Bicentennial!

This morning we dedicated Philippine's star on the St. Louis Walk of Fame. I kept thinking "she wouldn't like this . . ." She would have thought the star beautiful, for someone else! I hope that we will not be punished!

What an amazing day that we can celebrate this feast together through the marvels of technology! The Sacred Heart family of RSCJ, Associates, partners in mission, Children of Mary, alums, friends and family all over the province linked together to celebrate our great feast. Thanks to all who made it possible and may it continue!

One of my good friends, whenever she wanted to communicate the importance of her message would always say "this is the point" Today the point is God's immense love! It is the feast that celebrates the flow of God's love in the universe, in all of creation, and in each one and all of us. In the midst of the chaos and uncertainty of our world, the losses and grief that mark all of our lives, this feast says: hold fast you are loved, you are not alone and this love is meant to have an effect.

The readings let us know who we are: Deuteronomy says "you were the fewest of all peoples . . . and you are God's treasured possession. God's

love was set on you.” No need for self-aggrandizement and no need for wondering; the foundation is God’s love that brings people to freedom. It is a long standing covenant and it will not be broken. This is the basis of our shared covenants today. Beloved of God we move from whatever adversity to hope and freedom. This is the foundational belief that impelled Philippine to “set sail.” What does it impel us to?

In John’s first letter God’s immense love for humanity is revealed in Jesus becoming one of us, human as we are, sent that we may have life. The foundational message is again . . . God loves us, God first loves us and gives us the gift with which we love one another. We catch the flow of God’s love and are meant to give it to one another . . . it is the spirit within us that flows out to the world and to the person sitting next to us or walking on the street or in our thoughts and memories. This is the gift of God’s immense love – our love for one another, our compassionate care for a world in need of justice and peace, our compassionate care for the people with whom we work and share our lives. One of my favorite stories of Philippine is the one where she makes doll furniture for a child who has spent a long time in the infirmary. I love to think of the great saint who had such courage in adversity, who struggled with priests and bishops, who founded schools and broke the law to educate those who weren’t supposed to be educated, making tiny doll furniture so that a sick child would have a sense that she was known and cared for. Immense love in the sick room.

That is an example too that this is also the feast of God’s tender love, the intimate, invitational, personal love that is part of our mission to discover and reveal. The Gospel’s beautiful “come to me . . .” beckons us to move toward God’s love, to step out of our familiar surroundings and move

toward the love of God. Sister Barbara Dawson, our Superior General, in her letter for the feast highlights the impact of our coming to God, “take my yoke upon you and learn from me . . . “ I am a city girl, I grew up in an apartment in downtown Chicago and “yokes” don’t always speak to me. But Barb’s sense that we have some yokes that weigh us down and keep us from letting God’s love flow freely in our lives does speak to me. It also speaks to me that when yoked with someone else, both have to be in step in order to go forward. So while I ask what do I need to let go of? I also ask, when I take up God’s yoke, am I in step with God’s love for the world?

The Gospel also reveals the beautiful divine self-description ...”for I am meek and humble of heart, and I add and “God says I love tenderly.” In each of our lives, when we create the space, silence the busy hubbub and rest attentive we can be who we are honestly, authentically before ourselves and God and often we can then recognize how tenderly we are loved and are able to love tenderly, compassionately as well. Another experience from Philippine’s life – when she realized that plans to go to Sugar Creek were being made without her, she cried, tears flowed down her face – unabashedly vulnerable, she let herself be seen. Which of us hasn’t had experiences like that? Knowing how deeply and tenderly she was loved, she could just be who she was in the moment. How can we be more like that saint? Finally she did get to go . . . such a tender gift.

The immense and tender love of God is alive right here and right now. The flow of God’s love surrounds us and binds us together. Let’s take a moment to tune into the divine flow . . . let ourselves recognize and appreciate how much we are loved.

Accepting how deeply we are loved, carried on by the flow of God's love and the presence of all who are here in the flesh and in the virtual reality . . . we can rejoice in our deep sense of connectedness. We can rejoice in our unity and in our diversity. We have come to celebrate and to commit ourselves anew to what we cherish and share with the Society of the Sacred Heart throughout the world – the mission to discover and reveal God's love. We have that great call and we have each other to give us the courage and confidence to live what we know and desire. In these next moments as we make our commitments let us stand or sit proudly, let us speak humbly and let us be so grateful for the immense and tender love that has brought us to this moment.

AMEN

Sheila Hammond, RSCJ
Provincial
Society of the Sacred Heart
United States-Canada Province