

Live Streaming March 20th 2014

Good evening again Sisters. I am happy to have the opportunity to speak with you a second time during this evenings event.

Earlier this evening Elma, in setting the context, made reference to the pre-chapter gatherings during Autumn 2012. Reviewing the feedback from the October meeting, I found some recurring themes and questions which in turn influenced the thinking of our Provincial Chapter and emerged as the **Strands** which we have worked with this evening.

One of the questions that has stayed with me, asked, "What is the glue that holds us together?" Reflecting on this question I thought to myself, is this a new question in this a new time or is it just that the terminology is new. Over the year we may not have spoken about glue, but we did ask what unites us? We named Charism, Community Living, Community Prayer. I'm sure you remember the ponderings about community and ministry and the Chapter sessions where we tried to discern which is more important, community or ministry. Sometimes we came down on the side of ministry, sometimes a Chapter Statement emerged which put community life a first on the agenda for the next 6 years.

What is the glue that holds us together now? Soon after I found this question, I had a phone call from a friend of mine, a Sister who is on the Provincial Team in another Province. In the course of our conversation about the way forward she said, *"You know I think that the most important thing now is that we keep the door of compassion open."*

Sisters, at this time as we look at "The Pattern of the Call"; as we continue to explore our experiences and understandings of God; as we consider our **Identity** and look at new ways of being together in **Mission**, as we acknowledge our **Interconnection** with the whole web of life, as we look for an inclusive and consultative form of **Leadership**: I do believe that Compassion is the glue that will hold us together.

Wisdom traditions worldwide speak of compassion and call followers to be Compassionate, to care for one another and for the environment with Compassion. Many of our Gospel stories draw attention to the Compassion shown by Jesus to all and highlight for us the transforming power of Compassion. In the writings of Catherine there are numerous references to the centrality of Mercy and Compassion. Our Constitutions exhort us to respond to human need with tenderness and Compassion.

Systems theory suggests that we progress in loops and cycles. The image of the spiral suggests that energy, life, and thinking evolves and moves outward in widening circles, while at the same time moving inward enriching and deepening our wisdom and awareness. I suggest that it is this ripple effect, this widening and deepening of awareness, in our present time, that has led us to the Congregational Chapter question "In what ways might we respond anew, in hope, to our call to be a Compassionate Presence of God in our differing realities."

The Hebrew word for God's compassion, Rahamin is based on the same root word as the word for womb. Rahamin - God's compassion is like a warm sheltering womb in which we are nourished and grow strong. Joyce Rupp writes that *"Compassion enables us to relate more effectively to God,*

others, ourselves and the environment. God is always extending compassion towards us, loving us through the many ups and downs of our journey. We, in turn, are invited to offer this compassion to others. Life is a constant cycle of giving and receiving”.

With our present awareness, as life unfolds in a much broader context than we previously understood, how, and where can I respond anew to the call to be a compassionate presence. Where do I offer the gift of compassion in my present reality and with the insights that I now have. What are the circumstances, the situations, the developments which inspire in me a compassionate thought, or move me to offer the compassionate word. In her book *'Field of Compassion,'* the late Judy Cannato, a Catholic theologian, encourages us to focus our energies to help shape our world with compassion. She encourages us to consider how new learnings, new scientific discoveries, the new cosmology is transforming our understandings and our spiritual life. Judy Cannato links energy, intention and compassion. When I vibrate love and compassion my energy mysteriously unites with the energy of love and compassion all over the planet augmenting the field of compassion. Through the positive energy of compassion we can reach out and connect with the whole community of life. *'We are who we are through connection not through separation'.*

Self compassion is the starting point from which to grow the field of compassion. We are after all, to love others as we love ourselves (Luke 10;25). The better I love myself the better I can love others. The energy of compassion has both an inner and an outer dimension to it. Being in touch with my true self, through meditation, intention and compassion, I grow in insight and see myself not as an individual but as part of a family, a community, connected into the whole web of life; it is then that I can hear the cries of the trees and water, air and soil, animals and children and offer generous compassion to the whole community of life.

In our Lenten Reflection we are offered the Story of Bartimaeus (Luke 10); a story of faith and compassion. I love the straight forward conversation between Jesus and the blind beggar, what can I do for you? Rabbi, I want to see. Your faith has saved and healed you.

The prayer of Bartimaeus takes me back to my time in Trim as a young Sister. On the First Sunday evening of the month we attended The Women's Sodality in the parish church. Each evening the Priest recited and we repeated after him, The Lourdes Prayer: Lord that I may see, Lord that I may hear, Lord that I may walk. Many years passed before I grasped the depth or the true meaning of that prayer.

This evening my prayer for each of us is, Lord that I may see, Lord that I may hear, Lord that I may walk. That I may look, listen and move mindfully, and from that deep place within respond with Compassion.

That I may see the needs of our planet and its inhabitants; that I may hear the cry of the poor and seize the opportunity that is mine today, to be a compassionate presence and to consciously and intentionally shape my environment, our environment. I pray that I may walk with compassion on the earth creating a field of kindness and care and keeping the door of compassion open to all. May compassion be the glue which binds us to one another, to Mercy, to our world and to our God.

Thank you Sisters for your attention.