



FRANCISCAN SISTERS, T.O.R.
of Penance of the Sorrowful Mother
 from the desk of
Mother Mary Ann Kessler, T.O.R.
 EASTER 2016



Living the Mystery

DEAR FRIENDS,

As I write this letter for Easter while still in the season of Lent, I cannot help but reflect on the Paschal Mystery of dying and rising: Jesus' and our own. This pondering has only deepened as I experienced the recent loss of two friends. I began to ask myself, "If God were to say today that my life is to come to an end, would I have any regrets? Have I lived out my mission to completion?"

We each have a mission in life that is unique to us. No one else can fill our shoes. This personal mission is lived out in the context of Jesus' own Paschal Mystery—the mystery of sacrifice, the mystery of dying and rising.

Even within the fabric of nature there is this innate reality. The caterpillar sacrifices itself in the cocoon in order to become a butterfly. The acorn must die (sacrifice itself) if it is to become the mighty oak tree.

So what is our personal mission and why must there be sacrifice? Take the first part of the question. As I said before, we all have a unique call from the Lord, and this mission in some way always involves other people.

For some of us, it may mean being an intercessor; for others a model of faithfulness; for others a companion for the lonely, outcast, or abandoned; for others a helper, supporter, or encourager. The list could go on and on. The desire, the grace, and the gifts to fulfill this mission were planted within us by God when He created us. I look at my own life, and I can see how the Lord prepared me to serve in the many roles of leadership in our community I have had over the years. When I was a child I always had this sense that the Lord was calling me to be a leader. I did not know how or where or when, but in "my gut" I just knew. Over the years the Lord orchestrated events in my life that frequently landed me in some leadership role that I did not necessarily choose. Saying yes to these roles has involved sacrifice, but in carrying them out I am fulfilling my personal God-given mission which is also life-giving. I have also done a bit of traveling and have interacted with numerous people from all walks of life. What I have discovered from experience is that those individuals who lived out that call deep within them were the happiest people. They had no



To Make Known God's Merciful Love

regrets. They had a sense of satisfaction and “completion.” They were who God created them to be and were giving in the process.

Now, why must there be sacrifice? Because, as human persons, we are created to be in relationship with others in the spirit of genuine love, and authentic love is other-centered, requiring a dying to self. But with each death, there is also a “resurrection” to life. A song found in most parish hymnals, entitled ‘The Prayer of St. Francis’ (though it was not written by St. Francis), says it so beautifully: “It is . . . in giving of ourselves that we receive and in dying that we’re born to eternal life.” It seems so contradictory and yet the paradox is true. If we each die to ourselves and give to others, and others die to themselves and give to us, then we all receive and have our needs met. Here is a small example from my own life. There was a play happening in our local area, and though it was free admission, it required tickets to get in. I by chance had a ticket, but knew that there was another sister who really wanted to attend. So I gave my ticket to her, even though I did want to go. Well, since I stayed home I was able to receive a phone call from a dear friend I had not heard from in a long time. We had a wonderful visit, and that was far more life-giving for me than going to this play. This is the essence of being one in the family of God—in dying to ourselves and giving to others, we receive so much more.

Clarence Enzler in ‘Everyone’s Way of the Cross’ depicts Jesus saying so beautifully to each of us: “I told you at the start, my other self, my life was not complete until I crowned it by my death. Your ‘way’ is not complete unless you crown it by your life . . . So seek me not in far-off places. I am close at hand. Your workbench, office, kitchen, these are altars where you offer love. And I am with you there. Go now! Take up your cross and with your life complete your way.”

During this Easter Season, let us rejoice in the call that the Lord has given to each of us so personally. I will be praying for you. Thank you for your continued love and support of the sisters and of Christ’s mission. We could not build the kingdom without you.

With Christ’s blessings,

Mother Mary Ann Kessler, T.O.R.

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Open house & May crowning



Saturday, May 21, 2016

No RSVP Necessary || Donations Accepted



11:00 AM hayride, petting zoo, face painting, and more!

11:30 AM to 1:30 PM lunch is served

1:30 PM outdoor may crowning

2:30 PM to 3:00 PM youth and young adult vocation programs

3:45 PM indoor crowning & vigil Mass

