

Prayer Services for the World Day of Consecrated life and Mother Delphine Fontbonne, CSJ, February 2024

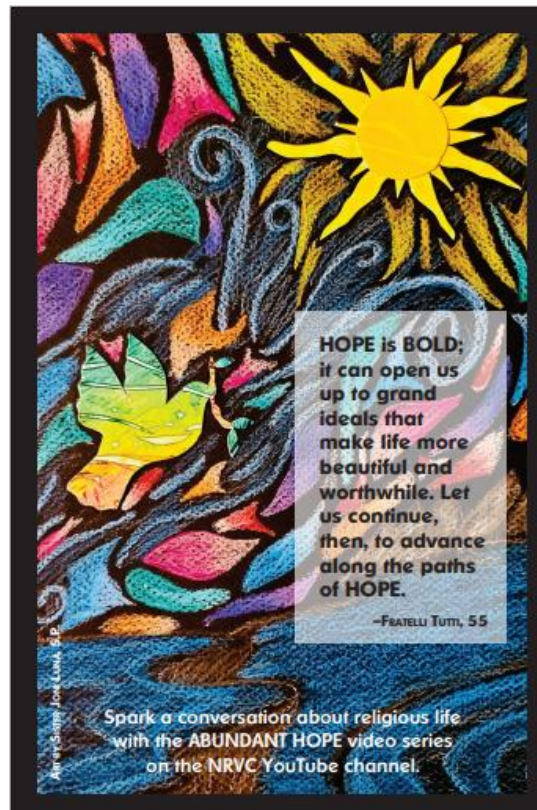
Introduction

This prayer service is for the World Day of Prayer for Consecrated Life (Feb. 2, 2024) which will be celebrated in the parishes on the weekend of February 3-4, 2024 and celebrating the life of Mother Delphine Fontbonne, CSJ who died on Feb. 7, 1856.

Preparation Suggestion

Prepare a focal point for a prayer circle with a cloth, a picture of Mother Delphine, and a lighted candle. Other possible symbols: constitutions, profession cross.

Prayer Service for World Day of Prayer for Consecrated Life



Open Song: The Deer Cry – Jenny HH

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=4IBoTx4-7lk&ab_channel=JennyHHMusic

Lyrics as Prayer

*I arise today through the strength of heaven
Light of sun, radiance of moon
Splendor of fire, speed of lightning
Swiftness of wind, depth of the sea
Stability of earth, firmness of rock
I arise today through God's strength to pilot me
God's eye to look before me
God's wisdom to guide me
God's way to lie before me
God's shield to protect me
From all who shall wish me ill
Afar and a-near
Alone and in a multitude
Against every cruel, merciless power
That may oppose my body and soul
Christ with me, Christ before me
Christ behind me, Christ in me
Christ beneath me, Christ above me
Christ on my right, Christ on my left
Christ when I lie down, Christ when I sit down
Christ when I arise, Christ to shield me
Christ in the heart of everyone who thinks of me
Christ in the mouth of everyone who speaks of me
I arise today.*

Excerpt from Pope Francis Homily (WDCL 2022)

Reflection and sharing

Brothers and sisters, we can ask, what moves our days? What is the love that makes us keep going? Is it the Holy Spirit, or the passion of the moment, or something else? How do we “move” in the Church and in society? Sometimes, even behind the appearance of good works, the canker of narcissism, or the need to stand out, can be concealed. In other cases, even as we go about doing many things, our religious communities can appear moved more by mechanical repetition – acting out of habit, just to keep busy – than by enthusiastic openness to the Holy Spirit. All of us would do well today to examine our interior motivations and discern our spiritual movements, so that the renewal of consecrated life may come about, first and foremost, from there.

Source:

https://www.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/messages/consecrated_life/documents/20220202_omelia-vitaconsacrata.html

Scripture Reading

1 Samuel 3:1-10

The boy Samuel ministered before the LORD under Eli. In those days the word of the LORD was rare; there were not many visions. One night Eli, whose eyes were becoming so weak that he could barely see, was lying down in his usual place. The lamp of God had not yet gone out, and Samuel was lying down in the house of the LORD, where the ark of God was. Then the LORD called Samuel. Samuel answered, “Here I am.” And he ran to Eli and said, “Here I am; you called me.” But Eli said, “I did not call; go back and lie down.” So he went and lay down. Again, the LORD called, “Samuel!” And Samuel got up and went to Eli and said, “Here I am; you called me.” “My son,” Eli said, “I did not call; go back and lie down.” Now Samuel did not yet know the LORD: The word of the LORD had not yet been revealed to him. A third time the LORD called, “Samuel!” And Samuel got up and went to Eli and said, “Here I am; you called me.” Then Eli realized that the LORD was calling the boy. So Eli told Samuel, “Go and lie down, and if he calls you, say, ‘Speak, LORD, for your servant is listening.’” So, Samuel went and lay down in his

place. The LORD came and stood there, calling as at the other times, “Samuel! Samuel!” Then Samuel said, “Speak, for your servant is listening.”

Reflection

Three times the Lord calls, “Samuel! Samuel!” The Divine Conversation is both personal and direct. The Lord intends to speak to Samuel directly, and so he calls him by name. As we hear in Isaiah, this is how God has established the conversation – he is God, he is with us, and he calls us by our name.

*But now thus says the Lord,
he who created you, O Jacob,
he who formed you, O Israel:
Do not fear, for I have redeemed you;
I have called you by name, you are mine. (Isaiah 43:1)*

Note the intimacy of this assurance. God creates us and forms us. As the Psalms say, God formed our inmost parts and knit us together in our mother’s womb (Psalm 139:13). This is as intimate and personal as we can get: no longer merely a claim about a philosophical origin but a description of a Divine touch in the moment of our tiny and very real beginning in conception. This is the realization that God is there with us before we even know ourselves, before our mothers and fathers knew us or knew of us. And this is the moment God claims and draws us into the Divine Conversation.

From our first moment of existence, we belong to God, and God is calling us by name and telling us the things we most need to hear, like “do not fear,” “you are mine,” and no matter what comes your way, you will not be overwhelmed or consumed because I am with you. This story of Samuel is a story of hearing that same call a personal call, by name, that has been echoing in his life all along – just as it echoes in ours.

The final feature of this conversation is the presence of a third party – the elderly priest, Eli. Eli participates by helping to clear up the misunderstanding. Eli’s presence in the story is essential to Samuel’s eventual entering into Divine Conversation rather than remaining stuck in his misunderstanding. This idea that we are not necessarily alone in the conversation is a comforting piece for our reflection.

Questions:

1. Spend a few minutes reflecting on your call and response journey to Religious Life.
2. Do you worry there is no particular path into the future?
3. Are you feeling that you are wandering without direction?
4. Who have been the Elis in your life?

Source: *Joining the Divine Conversation*, Chapter 1 24-27, Anne Jamieson

Concluding Prayer: Prayer for Vocations

Gracious God, we thank you for your loving kindness and faithfulness.

Be with us as we follow Jesus in serving the dear neighbour, and in spreading the good news of your love.

We ask, through the intercession of Mary and Joseph, that you inspire women and men to respond to your call to serve you in bringing love, justice and mercy to all in need.

We pray that all will realize their universal call to holiness and be open to discovering their vocational path.

Grant them wisdom to respond to your invitation with generosity, love and courage.

We thank you for your gift of our call to this Congregation of Great Love and through your grace may other generous and courageous women be inspired to join us.

We ask this through your son Jesus and in the power of your Holy Spirit. Amen

Source: Sisters of St. Joseph of Toronto, Prayer for Vocations

Prayer Service for Mother Delphine Fontbonne, CSJ



Opening Song: Canticle of the Turning – Rory Cooney

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=F9QeTmRCpW4&ab_channel=tranceseraph

Lyrics as Prayer

*My soul cries out with a joyful shout
That the God of my heart is great
And my spirit sings of the Wondrous things
That you bring to the ones who wait
You fixed your sight on your servant's plight*

*And my weakness you did not spurn
So, from east to west shall my name be blest
Could the world be about to turn?
My heart shall sing of the day you bring
Let the fires of your justice burn
Wipe away all tears for the dawn draws near
And the world is about to turn!
Though I am small, my God, my all, you
Work great things in me
And your mercy will last from the Depths
Of the past to the end of the age to be
Your very name puts the proud to shame
And to those who would for you yearn
You will show your might
Put the strong to flight
For the world is about to turn
My heart shall sing of the day you bring
Let the fires of your justice burn
Wipe away all tears
For the dawn draws near
And the world is about to turn!
From the halls of power to the fortress tower
Not a stone will be left on stone
Let the king beware for your
Justice tears ev'ry tyrant from his throne*

*The hungry poor shall weep no more
For the food they can never eat
There are tables spread, ev'ry
Mouth be fed
For the world is about to turn
My heart shall sing of the day you bring
Let the fires of your justice burn
Wipe away all tears
For the dawn draws near
And the world is about to turn!
Though the nations rage from age to age
We remember
Who holds us fast
God's mercy must deliver us from the conqueror's crushing grasp
This saving word that our forebears
Heard is the promise which holds us bound
'Til the spear and rod can be
Crushed by God
Who is turning the world around
My heart shall sing of the day you bring
Let the fires of your justice burn
Wipe away all tears
For the dawn draws near
And the world is about to turn!
My heart shall sing of the day you bring*

Let the fires of your justice burn

Wipe away all tears

For the dawn draws near

And the world is about to turn!

Reflections

Foreword by Sister St. John O'Malley, CSJ

“It gives me pleasure to express my satisfaction with this monograph “The Dawn of a New Day”, suggesting as it does that Mother Delphine was God’s instrument in the founding of the first Sisters of St. Joseph in Toronto and in Canada. The birth of Marie Antoinette Fontbonne in 1813, one hundred and seventy years ago, has not been dimmed in our memories by the passage of time. I am proud and happy to have lived seventy-three years in this Community of which she was the first Superior.

A new day dawned in 1851; another new day is peeping over God’s horizon in this changing Church and world, awaiting again our whole-hearted cooperation even when it means accepting the cross of Christ.”

Source: The Dawn of a New Day: A Sketch of the Life and Times of Sister Delphine Fontbonne 1813-1856 by Sister Mary Bernita Young, CSJ, Toronto, 1983

Homily Excerpts, Sr. Mary Mettler, CSJ for Mother Delphine Fontbonne Feast Day, Feb. 9, 2019

Our archives contain letters Delphine wrote about the difficulties and challenges she and her young companions faced – a new language and culture, great poverty, dependence on the Bishop for everything it seemed, and the young women wanting to join who had no religious formation; the needs were so great. I can imagine her prayer often being “Here I am Lord” – remind me again that it was you who sent me.

What would Mother Delphine’s message to us be today?

I believe that she would want us to honour our own gifts, our own fears, struggles and accomplishments– and there have been many.

I believe that she would also tell us that our mission is community; that there is nothing more important, more radical, more necessary in today’s world than to

nurture and foster community wherever we find it, wherever we are, with whatever means we have – whether it is prayer, solidarity, presence or our blessing.

We have come this far together and together we will journey on to the More that ever calls us into the future. May we always respond with the openness, zeal and freedom of our first Sisters as we say, “Here I am, send me”.

Questions:

1. How does Mother Delphine’s life and experience speak to you today?
2. How do Mother Delphine’s virtues that she lived in her life inspire you?

Intercessions:

Response: Lord hear our prayer

For our Holy Father Francis, and all Church leaders; may they follow the example of St Joseph and guide the Church in a responsible and dedicated manner. **We pray to the Lord...**

For all those who are discerning their vocation in life, particularly those whom the Lord is calling to consecrated life. May they be given the wisdom to hear God's call and the courage to respond generously. **We pray to the Lord...**

For all men and women preparing for the priesthood or consecrated life, that their days of formation be filled with joy, peace and the certainty of God’s love. **We pray to the Lord...**

For those who are consecrated to God by the vows of chastity, poverty and obedience. May they always reveal the love of Christ to those they encounter and continue to enrich our world by their dedicated lives of prayer. **We pray to the Lord...**

For our Congregation as we celebrate Mother Delphine Fontbonne, our Foundress, we ask to emulate her trust in God’s abiding presence and her courage, to do what is ours to do in our time. **We pray to the Lord...**

For an increase in awareness of the interconnectedness of all creation; may we diligently care for our common home. **We pray to the Lord...**

For a growth in compassion leading to peace and harmony throughout our world. **We pray to the Lord...**

For our deceased sisters, relatives and friends. **We pray to the Lord...**

Concluding Prayer

Mother Delphine, we honour you. You left your country and all that was familiar to you to come to a new land, speak a foreign language among strangers and serve a people very different from your own. As we experience our daily lives, and all the many rapid changes and difficulties of our times, we want to act with your courage and fidelity. Watch over us and ask that we be graced with the wisdom to know what is ours to do in our time and to do it with the same courage and fortitude as you. Help us to witness to the joy of a life lived with Christ, and to nourish new life in whatever way we are invited. Accompany us always Amen

Concluding Song: A New Chapter, Joyce Rouse, Earth Mama

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=isewq1KqFFY&ab_channel=EarthMama

Today we turn a page, not a beginning or an end

But the next part of the journey.

Our call is borne of faith, for every step of the way

Now we travel on together.

Stronger and wiser, with a history richer than we had alone,

With gratitude, and humility ---

This is a New Chapter, the next chapter of our journey

Only God could know this would be our road,

This is a new chapter, the next chapter of our story.

The Way is true and clear, our story dances on

for a New Chapter to begin

We've crossed the stormy seas, we have traveled rutted roads

But we would not change our journey...

This is our destiny, our common path to Greater Love

What a privilege before us

Stronger and wiser, our hands and our prayers are multiplied

With gratitude, and humility—In this New Chapter of our life.

This is a New Chapter, the next chapter to our journey,

Only God could know this would be our road

*This is a new chapter, the next chapter to our story.
Our hearts are opened wide, our steps are sanctified
for a New Chapter of our life.*

Repeat last 2 lines

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