

Sally's First Vow Reflection by Sr. Kathleen Patrice "KP" Sullivan

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When Sally asked if I would give the reflection for her first vow ceremony, I felt honored and yet very challenged. A couple of days later, I remembered a homily Pope Francis gave where he talked about the importance of moving beyond our comfort zone, risking, and stepping into the unknown, knowing that Jesus is always with us.

And so, Sally, we are here today, not only to celebrate you, but also, to celebrate the gift we are to one another, to the Dear Neighbor, to the Church, to our World, and to our Earth. The readings you selected beautifully remind us that it is possible to become one with all God created.

In the First Reading, *When the Heart Wakes*, Sue Monk Kidd's prayer calls and challenges us, to be free enough and willing enough, to risk being true to ourselves rather than remaining fixed in our comfortable patterns. To leap into the unknown can be quite frightening---like walking in the dark without a light. Yet, we need to keep in mind Pope Francis' messages, that Jesus is always with us AND not to be afraid to dream of great things. God will lead us into those enormous spaces of becoming!

Sue Monk Kidd concludes her prayer with a request to God,

"Help me to green my soul and to risk becoming the person you created me to be. Tomorrow I might regret these words, but (today) I speak them, for I know that you're somewhere inside them, that you love me and won't leave me alone in their echo."

Anticipating possible regret, recognizes the risk. Speaking the words, makes the commitment public. These words for Sally are her public profession of vows.

Shortly Sally, you will profess your first vows to God, according to the Constitution of the Sisters of St. Joseph of Carondelet.

Our vows of:

- poverty – living simply;
- chastity – loving freely;
- obedience – listening attentively;

AND, our charism of unifying love are the foundation of our lives together.

In the Psalm response we are reminded to:

- Love freely, as Jesus did, by "Teaching us, O Merciful One, to have generous hearts;"
- Live simply, as Jesus did, for "In You alone is our trust, O Holy One, walking your Way is the truth that sets us free."

- And listen attentively, as Jesus did, “May (we listen) and be content to wait in peace, until you stir the waters within to act.”

And so, we see, in Paul’s letter to the Corinthians, the challenge to act through our charism of unifying love, using the gifts of the one body, while encompassing the gifts of the many parts, including unity and diversity. The Spirit gives each of us special gifts. Whatever these gifts might be, they are meant to be shared with others.

Paul continues, using the body as an analogy, that we are many parts, but only one body, where each member is dependent on the other, and the body needs all the parts to live fully.

Particularly meaningful for Sally, is Paul’s observation that “If one part of the body suffers, all suffer.” We have seen this in the broken systems in our world today, where we can’t help but notice disunity and division.

Many parts of the body of Christ are suffering because of this brokenness, as seen in:

- The rejection of immigrants
- Children separated from their parents
- Ongoing racism, prejudice, and discrimination
- Unjust killings
- Those suffering from Covid-19.

These are but a few!

How do we respond to these systemic injustices? How do we treat others who have been pushed to the margins? How do we right the wrongs?

Paul also says, “If one part is honored, all share in the joy.”

It is possible through the joy of Christ’s Resurrection, knowing He is by our side walking with us, each step of the way. We can change through our interactions and acceptance of one another, acknowledging each one strengths and weaknesses. Our interdependence with one another, and all of Creation, challenges us to make that change daily.

Joyce Rupp also speaks about diversity and unity in a way that reflects our CSJ commitment to be attentive to Creation. She suggests that It is possible to become one with the Earth just as it is possible to become one with all people, -- their pain, my pain; their joy, my joy; their struggle and delight an echo of my own.

It is possible to become one with Earth

- Appreciate the beauty of each season
- Walk barefoot along the beach
- Take time to touch and smell the roses; inhale the fresh air as it fills our lungs
- Listen to Sally play the piano
- And in keeping with our Ignatian spirituality, “finding God in all things.”

Yes, it is possible to become one.

Yes, it is possible.

In our CSJ Constitution we read,

The Spirit calls us to live our consecration in community, and with the strength that comes from our lives together, to turn beyond ourselves to serve a world in need.

This is how we are able to respond to the pain and suffering of the body of Christ, by drawing on the strength that comes from our shared life, expressed through the vows, and being faithful to the Mission of Jesus.

Sally, in closing, I would like to share a quote from John O'Donahue, an Irish poet:

May your life awaken to the call of its freedom

And

May all that holds you

Of smallness and loss

Fall from its hungry ledge

Into the creative clay of your heart.