

Being Called Anew
Reflections on CSA Leadership Installation Day
September 12, 2009

My reflections this morning are centered in gratitude, gratitude that extends to each of you from Sisters Diane, Sharon, Doris, and I for your presence with us this morning. I also want to particularly thank Sister Julia and Sister Ruth for sharing leadership with Sister Diane and I over these past four years and for orchestrating this beautiful celebration this morning.

Thank you for your prayers of blessing and your promise of support as we accept the call of leadership in CSA. We stand before you today knowing full well that it is the love of God and your love that will sustain us in the journey ahead, along with the willingness to eat humble pie now and then, to enjoy some good laughs, to allow ourselves some healing tears, to be wise delegators and gracious receivers, and most of all to be able to recognize when it is time to let it go and let God take the lead.

Bishop Sklba, thank you for being with us today and for being a friend and brother through so many seasons of our life as Sisters of St. Agnes. I know you have presided at many special occasions during this past week and have more to come today. Know that we are sincerely grateful that you are with us to share in this new moment for us as a congregation. Know too, that our commitment to be women of the church remains strong even as we discern how we are called to live out this commitment in service of the church and the world of our day.

In accepting the call to leadership today we are humbled to stand on the shoulders of truly gifted, gutsy, and faith-filled women who bore the mantle of leadership in the midst of the needs and the yearnings of their time. With them we say, *Glory be to God whose power at work in us can do infinitely more than we can ask or imagine from generation to generation in the church.... (Ephesians 3:20)* and I add, in the generations of our congregation. The stories of each of our general superiors, their councils, and the spirit of the sisters they served show how together they were graced to rise to the moment and respond with amazing courage, determination, keen professional and business savvy, and with very earthy, unique, and genuine humanity, all centered in a deep trust in God's providence and wisdom.

The lotus, pictured on the cover of your liturgy booklet, symbolizes the journey of discernment we have been engaged in as sisters and associates for the past two years. After 150 years of faithful service we knew we could not rest on past glory and past blessings. We too, need to rise up and respond to the broken, the lame, the blind, the voiceless, and the lovers of God of our day. Our times are calling us forward, the mission of Jesus burns in our hearts, and our current reality as women religious offers so many new possibilities for the future if we but take the risk to open our lives and fully welcome what is unfolding within us and before us.

The lotus stands as a symbol of vitality, of resurrection, and undying hope. It grows in muddy and murky waters, in fact, we discovered that the more the muck, the sweeter the aroma of the blossom. The lotus flower pictured here blossomed on our final day of chapter after we had spent two years in preparation and nine intense and spirited days in chapter seeking to hear clearly and respond generously to God's call for us at this time in our life as a congregation.

For us, this timely blossoming, was God's way of saying "Yes, you heard my call. Now go and live it. BE community in more intentional and expanded ways, continue to embody my mission as builders of community and lovers of creation in this broken and often isolating world and struggling church."

With a yes to all that is and all that will be, knowing full well that there will be moments of darkness and moments of light, we pledge today to be faithful leaders and faithful members walking in communion with all of you, our associates, partners in ministry, staff, donors, family, and friends. Together, with our variety of the Spirit's gifts, we make up the Congregation of St. Agnes today. Together we are the body of Christ, a shining presence of hope and light as wondrous and alive as a blossoming lotus.

Close by singing together, #722 - *I Say, "Yes."* Sing in both languages.