

Today is a glorious day of celebration as we recognize Sister Kathleen Christa's twenty-five years of monastic profession. As we celebrate her *fiat* to God and to this Benedictine community, we are each reminded of our journey and our fidelity to our Creator God who first called us into being and continues to transform us through everyday encounters with the sacred.

Sister Kathleen Christa wanted me to share with you that this opportunity when her families – her biological family and her Benedictine family – as well as her guests, are able to come together as one for such a joyous occasion fills her with a deep sense of gratitude.

We welcome Sister's family: her sister Maureen, and Maureen's daughters: Beth (Dave), Mo, Jenny, and Kara. You have no idea how excited she has been since learning that you were coming. Your presence here today is a gift for her and for our community as well. Thank you for being here.

Fr. Joel, our Benedictine brother, thank you for being here to share in this liturgy with us. It is a blessing to have our brother monks from St. Bernard Abbey on this sacred Benedictine journey with us.

As I reflected on Sister's readings and music selections for the liturgy as well as the overall worship program, I was particularly drawn to the artwork on the cover of the program. There are so many fascinating images and stories woven together within this one picture. It truly speaks of the awesomeness of a God who formed all of creation, and every day calls it into a harmonious existence.

The stories within this picture are all connected to the One Creator God. *Our* stories, too, are all connected to the One Creator God, and each day, *we* are being called to live harmoniously with all of creation.

St. Benedict instructs in Chapter 72 of the Holy Rule: "No one is to pursue what she judges better for herself, but instead, what she judges better for someone else." As Benedictines, we are called to give witness to this type of radical hospitality not only toward one another, but toward all of creation in order that we may be the instruments of God bringing about a daily harmonious existence.

When Kathleen (Kathy) came to Sacred Heart Monastery, she brought with her a love for stories, an artistic eye for creative balance, and a heart enlarged by radical hospitality. These gifts have continued to enrich her life and be a blessing for us throughout these past twenty-five years of her monastic profession.

She shared with me that as a young child she could sit for hours listening to someone spin a tale or read a good storybook to her. She was captivated by how all of the moving parts of the story came together to create a sense of wonder and wholeness. Her favorite book as a child was *The Little Engine That Could*. She said that this book taught her that a small, persevering engine, could bravely **give her all** to accomplish a difficult job while also helping others.

Prior to entering the community, Kathleen Christa worked in advertising, so had a keen sense of artistic balance. She could look at a design or a display and intuitively know whether or not a harmonious balance existed. At some point in her professional career, she discovered that her own life was out of balance and felt God calling her to give *her* all in helping others, just like the *Little Engine*.

She transitioned from encouraging people to spend money on items not needed to extending herself in hospitality to people in need. When she served on the staff of Volunteers in Action for the Diocese of Pueblo, she welcomed and journeyed with people, primarily immigrants from Mexico and Central America, who came to the United States to harvest crops from the fields. She witnessed people giving *their* all to help others. Later, she served on the staff of a Community Center in New York where, once again, she opened her heart and hands in welcome to underprivileged children and adults.

Just as in the Emmaus story, Kathleen Christa's heart and soul were awakened by the insightful and challenging presence of her companions on the journey. She experienced first-hand the importance of welcoming all as Christ and saw the effects on others when radical hospitality was shown to them. These experiences led her to an awareness of how an Everyday God was calling her to a deeper realization of the sacredness of life. Prior to knowing anything about the Benedictine path that God had for her, she was truly listening with the Benedictine ear of her heart, opening herself to being transformed by the love of Christ.

Sister Kathleen Christa's keen sense of artistic balance extended to seeking a harmonious balance with all of creation. Where did the path of this journey lead her? Here, to the Sacred Heart of Jesus. Resting within the heart of Jesus and within the heart of this Benedictine community, Kathleen Christa continued her journey of seeking God through the events found in her everyday life.

She experienced great joy while ministering in our Retreat Center where she assisted the Community in offering hospitality to God's people, echoing Pope Francis' description of Benedictine monasteries as a place where people come "to discover the beauty of silence and rediscover themselves- in harmony with creation- allowing God to restore a proper order in their lives."

Serving as Novice Director for the Community, she continued to offer hospitality by journeying with women who were seeking to know God through this Benedictine way of life. Once again, like the Little Engine That Could, she bravely **gave her all** to accomplish a difficult job while also helping others.

Even now, she holds sacred her ministry of hospitality – praying for all who take time away from their busy and hectic lives, to get away and listen to God's voice here in our monastery and retreat center. She stays attune to the painful groaning of the people of the world as they encounter the challenges of our times. Through her intense prayer-life, Sister Kathleen Christa strives to be an instrument of God doing her part to bring about a daily harmonious balance within God's creation.

Thank you, Sister Kathleen Christa for your twenty-five years of fidelity to this Benedictine way of life here at Sacred Heart. Thank you for the witness you are to us as a woman of deep prayer and welcoming hospitality. May we all continue to be open to the Christ in our midst and may we have the courage to allow ourselves to be transformed by it.