



InnerView



With Mother Marietta, H.P.B., Rev. Mother Prioress of the Handmaids of the Precious Blood

On November 21—the Feast of the Presentation of Mary—the Church will be celebrating the World Day of Cloistered Life, otherwise known as Pro Orantibus Day. Why is this hidden vocation so essential to the Church’s life and mission?

In the Western world, we have become inordinately attracted by consumerism and success. Even saints are lauded in those terms: “He baptized 50,000 people in his lifetime...she founded 69 schools...” The contemplative can back away from this numbering and look at each needy individual as Jesus sees them. In His Heart, the crying need for the love and mercy of God is painfully recognized and shared so that prayer and apostolic suffering become a gift of oneself in union with Mary for the bestowal of grace that can change lives.

Pope Francis has proclaimed an Extraordinary JUBILEE YEAR OF MERCY that will overlap with the YEAR OF CONSECRATED LIFE. What significance do you see in this overlap for consecrated religious men and women who witness to Christ through the spiritual and corporal works of mercy?

Neither spiritual nor corporal works exist independently in the realm of ideas or armchair

theology; the Incarnation of the Son of God clearly identifies the life of discipleship as one that is totally given for others and for the glory of God. We’ve got “Good News”—God’s love and mercy is for everyone, and can reach everyone no matter what their sufferings may be. We need to go on to say, “The Good Shepherd will be with you in the pain and suffering in a way far beyond your imagination; you can learn from Him to live in a broken world which may not change. He will teach you how to change in



the midst of tragedy, suffering, and death. He’s already been there.”

Consecrated life is meant first of all to be a witness of the love and mercy of God in ways that we might not have guessed. I know God’s mercy because it has been given to me in circumstances that were horrific (the Vietnam War). The war didn’t end, but I can witness to a new way of living life in God that I could not have guessed, because He gave me the interior grace to

live in a new way. We are a people who want to “fix” everything; Jesus has a different way of doing that than we do.

As a Handmaid of the Precious Blood, your specific vocation is “to obtain from the Divine Mercy of God the graces priests need to live out their vocation.” Why is this significant, especially given that all priests are called to be “missionaries of mercy” by their ordination?

Without the priest, the Real Presence of God is not available. The Sacraments effectively unite us to the merciful love of God and to God Himself. This is beyond pop-psychology and positive thinking. Let’s get *real*. God loves us so much that He wants to unite Himself to us for all eternity, and the ordained priesthood is absolutely essential to His plan.

Your founder, Very Rev. Gerald Fitzgerald, s.P., cared for troubled priests in the hope of restoring them to their priestly ministry. How do the Handmaids participate in this mission today?

The Handmaids learned very early on that offering a total *Yes* to God would cost them a great deal—giving up of their expectations of

what a contemplative life would be to follow the daily path that God showed them, and believing without seeing that by the “next best step” Divine Providence would weave the pattern of their lives according to His will. He asks tremendous faith of the nuns, who almost never see the result of their

sacrifice and prayer. A woman coming to our community has to be convinced that Jesus is calling her to give her life totally and in joy as she daily responds to whatever He sends. It is the same *Fiat* that Our Blessed Mother offered.

God is the only one who can bring good out of evil; we don’t passively accept evil, but use it for God’s purposes and His glory (cf. Gen. 50:20). The majority of inquiries we receive are women looking for safety and peace. I have to tell them, “Welcome to the Church militant!” A vocation is an answer of one’s whole life to a specific, personal call from Christ, in our case “for Christ in His Priest.” The spiritual combat is real and cosmic, but we all have to fight that battle within ourselves before we can be detached enough to help others; self-centeredness has to be driven out.

What impact did Servant of God Rev. John A. Hardon, S.J., have in your community’s implementing the directives of the Second Vatican Council for authentic renewal and also helping to involve others—especially the laity—in the establishment of your external apostolates?

Father Hardon helped the community understand the depth of the teaching of Vatican II, and



the teaching on the Church and religious life in the 20th century that was so eloquently shown in St. John Paul II. He was instrumental in the founding of the Oblates of the Precious Blood—laity who take a one-year correspondence course with us about the priesthood and prayer for priests; we train them in what is commonly spoken of as “spiritual motherhood for priests.” Two other related organizations which Father Hardon helped us begin are the Lay Associates of the Priesthood and Confraternity of Mary (for priests and religious). Over the past 41 years, we have through these organizations enrolled over 38,000 priests to be prayed and sacrificed for; many of these lay people are creative and zealous, and tremendously dedicated to giving their lives and prayers for priests.

In recent years your community moved its motherhouse from New Mexico to Tennessee. How has this relocation sparked a renewed fervor in your contemplative life and also given it much needed exposure to attract new vocations?

We moved onto our new property July 16, 2015, in New Market, Tennessee. The Most Rev. Richard Stika and Cardinal Justin Rigali have given us tremendous

support through their counsel and prayer. In addition, we have a dedicated advisory team of laity who have helped us over the past two years to find our new location, and to continue to build a way of communication through the Internet which is compatible with contemplative life; we write articles and pieces for blogs, and take photos, for use on FACEBOOK and TWITTER, but a layman does all the work of putting it out to the world, including some of the work on our website. He is the cloistered wall for us in that regard. We live in a beautiful location on the Holston River, which all the people helping with our remodeling and building find a very healing and peace-filled setting.

Where can people find out more about your mission to priests?

Those interested can visit our website, NunsforPriests.org, that has more information on the Handmaids and where they can “Adopt-a-Priest” and receive the first name of a priest for whom they can pray. On our website visitors can read our newsblog, newsletter, TWITTER posts, and link to our FACEBOOK page, as well as learn more about our vocation and charism for the sanctification of priests and how we live our Eucharistic Adoration. An entire section is devoted to our prayer apostolates that assist others in sharing our mission even in their lives outside our cloister. We can be reached at contact@NunsforPriests.org or *Cor Jesu* Monastery, 596 Callaway Ridge Road, New Market, TN 37820.☪