

CDP Associate Renewal

August 22, 2020

– WISDOM FROM JEAN PIERRE DE CAUSSADE

These are not easy times, are they? We like to believe in progress, in a straight path out of an unwanted challenge into a better solution. However, healing paths are never linear. They meander. They flow, like the great rivers of the world, going where the water needs to flow.

Today's scripture is part of a much longer psalm. It is the story of human challenges laid beside God's endless faithfulness. This is THE human story. This is OUR current story. Life can be very hard at the same time as God can be very good. What a beautiful paradox!

A few weeks ago a friend of mine sent me this quote from 18th century French Mystic Jean Pierre De Caussade (1675-1751). (Interesting (and providential?) that Sr. Barbara found comfort from the same mystic in the last few days.....)

“God instructs the heart, not by ideas but by pains and contradictions.”

His classic writings in *Abandonment to Divine Providence* express his belief that the present moment is a sacrament from God and that self-abandonment to it and its needs is a holy state.....

I must confess that I was not familiar with his work. But the quote made me hungry for more. So an internet search later, I came up with some beautiful quotes and much more wisdom from this great man. I am meandering....here are some of my favorite quotes which I gleaned from a website “One Little Angel, Wisdom Quotes” ...

<https://www.onelittleangel.com/wisdom/quotes/saint.asp?mc=308>

Come, then, my beloved souls, let us fly to that love which calls us.

Why are we waiting?

Let us set out at once,

Let us lose ourselves in the very heart of God and become intoxicated with His love.

Let us snatch from His heart the key to all the treasures of the world and start out right away on the road to heaven.

Form Beevers, Jon, trans. *Abandonment to Divine Providence*, NY Doubleday, 1975, pp 25,37, 40, 73, 81-82

With faith,

All that is dark becomes light, and what is bitter becomes sweet.

Faith transforms ugliness into beauty, and malice into kindness.

Faith is the mother of tenderness, trust, and joy ...

There is nothing faith cannot overcome;
It passes beyond all shadows and through the darkest clouds to reach the truth, which it
embraces and can never be parted from.

Ramiere, Rev. H., trans. *Abandonment*. New York: Benziger Brothers, 1887, pp. 112

Come, not to study the map of spiritual terrain,
But to possess it for yourself; To walk about in it without fear of going astray.
Why learn the theory of Divine Grace, and what it has been doing throughout the ages, when
you can become and be the very instrument of its operation?

Come, not to discuss the words of others,

But to listen...

For in the sacredness of every moment

Divine Grace is telling you alone all that is required.

Ramiere, Rev. H., trans. Abandonment. New York: Benziger Brothers, 1887, pp. 79

So where does my meandering perhaps lead us?
Over the last few months, our souls have been battered by pandemics, protests over ongoing
racial injustice, economic insecurities, environmental crises, loss of loved ones... (to name a
few,..)

What shapes our future?

I am convinced that what shapes my future/our future more than anything else is our faith. Its
strength, its resilience, our practices (physical and spiritual) and their importance, will all
determine how we weather the future.

I fall on these familiar words:

“With radical trust in our Provident God and informed by our, discernment, we the Sisters and
Associates of Divine Providence commit to

Openness in change

Hope in renewal

Courage in uncertainty

Vibrancy in diminishment

Transparency in relationship

Peace and wisdom in troubled times.”

As a community, we begin the extraordinary responsibility of discerning what the future holds
for community life and it’s ministries as the Community prepares for Chapter. This is a new
walk and language for me...but not an unfamiliar path for one who’s immersed in the “church”
and how it functions....

The question I asked myself is what shapes my faith?
What will “root” my discernment in the months to come?

Five things came to mind and, honestly, I’m not going to elaborate on them because in many ways, I’m preaching to the choir.....

- **Accept change with gratitude**

- **Cultivate resilience**

- **Create practices, physical and spiritual, that restore and renew**

- **Embrace Prayer as Communion with God**

And finally, as Sisters and Associates, this is so important for the future and so challenging in times such as these as we are a community together yet apart:

- **Strengthen Relationships**

Spouses, family, family friends, community and our interactions with the broader worldwide community are important aspects of our walk into the future. In times such as these, strengthening relationships becomes an intentional, deliberate act....we continue to be in chosen or forced isolation. How do we nurture relationships...

You’ve all been invited to participate in Conversation Circles...

Our Chapter Conversation Circles will include discussion about what we need from each other as we move into the future. It is not just about physical aging, it is about living life together and a vision for ministry in the future. The more we share, the stronger our bonds become and the richer our relationships become.

What Unseen Things Does God Still Want Us to Accomplish?

Not surprisingly this verse from [Hebrews 11:1](#) comes to mind as I think of these things.
Faith shows the reality of what we hope for; it is the evidence of things we cannot see,
None of us know what the future holds but this verse sums it up well

What do we hope for as we look to the future?

What are the unseen things God still wants us to accomplish? I wonder.

How can we continue to be an advocate for justice and sustainability?

I am, like many of you, appalled by the political and cultural environment in which we live. ...

I believe in a God of love not hate,
a God of forgiveness not retribution,
of caring and compassion not indifference
of peace not war and violence.

How do we share God's love for all the people of the world and for the world itself in this kind of an environment?

What do you think?

As you look at the future what are you most passionate about and how does that shape how you act and what you commit your life to?

How does this shape how we move forward, in faith and commitment, as Sisters and Associates of Sisters of Divine Providence?