

Christmas Season

Mary's Yes

*Behold, I am the handmaid of the Lord.
May it be done to me according to your word.*

Luke 1:38

Mother Mary, you were always yes, even when you didn't understand the details. If it was from God, it was enough. Yes. Be it done unto me.

I'm not that trusting, not that open, not so willing to leap. I want facts, hows, whys, whens, and wheres. I want to understand the details.

But if I look at the joyful moments in my life, the true God moments, they all involved a risk, a vulnerable moment, a timid yes.

And with each yes, my voice grows stronger, my eyes grow clearer, and I get a little nearer to the total yes of you, Mary. Be it done unto me. YES.

Lent

Temptation

When the devil had finished all this tempting he left him, to await another opportunity.

Luke 4:13

Being ordained doesn't mean that temptations stop! They simply take new forms. The temptations to power, self-aggrandizement, aloofness, and pride are constant and deceptively easy to trip over. My friends put me on a pedestal.

Jesus, you understand these temptations, these tools of Satan. Help me to resist them, just as you did, through prayer and fasting and detachment from the world. Feed me on your word and your Eucharist so that I can remain a faithful servant. Walk the desert with me and help me to recognize the Trickster when he calls.

The Triduum – Thursday of the Lord's Supper

Celebrating *Diaconia*

Do you realize what I have done for you?

John 13:12

Servant God, more than any other liturgical celebration, Holy Thursday is the feast of diaconal identity. In the midst of the eucharistic feast, we pause and reach out to others in a dramatic, symbolic way—by washing their feet.

As I prepare to assist the celebrant on this special day, let me take a moment to consider all the people I've served in the past year: lives I've touched in small ways, lives I've touched in major ways, both known and unknown. I thank you for this privilege. More importantly, though, I consider all your people who have served me in my ministry, who have washed my feet, and I thank you for their presence in my life. Together, as Peter so eloquently puts it, we are washed head to foot!

Two Worlds

*In every circumstance and in all things
I have learned the secret of being well fed and of going hungry,
of living in abundance and of being in need.*

Philippians 4:12

The battle is on. The work week begins and the competition for dollars, for business, for control is spinning up like a turbine. I am struck by the vast gulf between the polarities of God and mammon. I am in both worlds, not by choice, but by necessity. I have a family to feed, house, and clothe.

Jesus, help me to understand when enough is enough. Help me always to see the people behind the power plays. Help me to protect the ones who are in the way, who are in danger of getting run over.

Give me, Lord, a healthy sense of detachment, so that I can echo Paul's words and be content with whatever outcome arises. There lies true peace.

Climbing Down

*If anyone wishes to be first,
he shall be the last of all and the servant of all.*

Mark 9:35

Unlike the world, where being first is about being on top and having everyone serve you, the kingdom of heaven is upside down. Paradoxically, the way up the spiritual ladder is achieved by going down.

Earning, striving, achieving, winning—these are all ingrained in me from childhood. But these are idols, dead statues, lifeless lumps of clay.

Lord, help me to understand that I can never earn your love. It is always and everywhere given to me; I simply need to absorb it, to open myself to it—yes, to *rely* on it. And as my cup is filled and overflows, I am compelled to share your love, because there's plenty to go around. It's the only way my ministry is even possible. What good news!

Let me show you.

Vesting

Deacons must be serious, straightforward, and truthful.

1 Timothy 3:8

Baptized into service. It's simple, really. My duty as a deacon is no more than what we are all called to be. My alb of white reminds me of my baptism, my entry into the body of believers, my symbolic death to this world, my entry ticket to the Ark of the Church. I celebrate that moment as I don the white robe.

Baptized into service. The cincture, a simple rope of cotton, ties me to you, Lord, as I am led to places I would rather not go.

Baptized into service. My stole reaffirms what the people of God proclaimed aloud on my ordination day. I am to be a model of service, an icon of Christ the servant, never the focal point, humble yet active.

Baptized into service. Alb, cincture, and stole. My skin.

Working with My Spouse

*A worthy wife brings joy to her husband,
peaceful and full is his life.*

Sirach 26:2

O God of love, I thank you for the gift of my dear wife. She has been my soulmate and constant companion through discernment, formation, service, ordination, and ministry. Just as a rose bush needs careful attention, water, and sunlight to bloom, so too does an effective diaconate arise from the fertile soil of a loving marriage.

As we work our ministry together, each of us contributing our specific talents to the work of the Lord, I am in awe of how God blends our lives in ways we never expected, all for the service of God's people. My grateful heart overflows with joy.

Meeting with My Pastor

Since we have gifts that differ according to the grace given to us, let us exercise them.

Romans 12:6

It's not easy to be a pastor. His hat rack is full. We each have different charisms, different gifts, different calls, but all in service to the one Lord. My duty is to ease his burden, to complement his role, to take a load from his shoulders, to be servant.

Loving God, help us both to keep our focus on the people, on the ministries that make a difference, on gathering together and sending forth. Keep our mouths from gossip and complaints, let charity win our tongues. Show us how to work together, even while we work independently. Grace our meeting with your presence.