

Homily for the Ordination of Irene Senn
Milwaukee Sept. 22-2013

“I have a dogmatic certainty: God is in every person’s life. You can, you must try to seek God in every human life...Although the life of a person is a land full of thorns and weeds, there is always a space where the good seed can grow. You have to trust God.”

If someone would have told me a year ago that I would open a homily at the ordination of a womanpriest with a quote by a pope, I would have laughed, a rather angry, sarcastic laugh. Well today this happened. I started the homily for the ordination of our sister Irene with a quote from the interview pope Francis gave to his Jesuit brother Antonio Spadaro in August. I am laughing, not with sarcasm but with joy.

Let me repeat two of the sentences from the quote: “God is in every person’s life” and “You have to trust God.” It is our custom in RCWP to let the ordinands chose the readings for their ordination liturgy. When I asked Irene why she had chosen the readings from Exodus, 2 Corinthians and Luke, her answer was: “Trust. I believe God will provide. God has provided in the past and will do so in the future.”

All three readings deal with food. In the Older Testament reading food is given to the wandering Israelites. They were grumbling and not only from their stomachs. God listened and gave them what they needed, not more not less. In 2 Corinthians Paul reminds us that the seed comes from God but we need to respond with planting generously if we want to harvest generously.

In Luke's gospel about the birds and the flowers our brother Jesus tells us in a powerful way what is at the center of most religions: God is in every person's life and we need to respond with trust and generosity.

You chose wisely, Irene, with the readings you elected for the day of your ordination. The Eucharist will be at the center of your priestly ministry. Bread and wine represent the body and blood of our brother Jesus. He like no other showed us the face of God. He invited all to the table, sinners and saints, men and women, rich and poor, Jew and Gentile. He suffered, died and was raised, so we would know that God is with us always.

I know you are aware of the awesome responsibility to lead the community in the celebration of these great mysteries. And don't believe those who say you cannot function in persona Christi because you are a woman. Both you and the community will represent our brother Jesus, every time you celebrate the Eucharist, as we do today.

You know that the hunger is great in our world, in our church. Sometimes we feel impotent in the face of all the violence, inequality, pain and neglect we see around us. We fear that we don't have enough food, strength, patience, courage and wisdom to respond to all who are calling out to us, including our mother earth. There may be times when we do not even believe any more that God is present. It is at those times, that I encourage you to go back to the readings of today, go back to Francis's interview. Above all, go to your brothers and sisters, go to your community and let them feed you.

I want to share with you a prayer that gives me hope and strength in difficult and in good times. It is: Bakerwoman God by Alla Bozarth Campbell. Alla belongs to the first group of Episcopal women ordained to the priesthood in the early 1970s. This prayer deals with food, it depicts God as woman. This prayer talks about the process of God forming and shaping us, so we can become food for the world. The process is not always easy but if we trust, we will be filled and we can fill others.

In a few minutes some of us will lay our hands on your head. In preparation for those moments, listen to the words of the prayer describing our Great Mother God shaping us like a loaf of bread with her divine and knotty pair of knuckles, so we can become food for world.

Bakerwoman God by Alla Bozarth Campbell:

<http://www.poemhunter.com/poem/bakerwoman-god/>