

Monday, July 31, 1809 ∞ ∞ **Friday, July 31, 2009**

THE 'TE DEUM' OF JOY

A celebration of the 200th anniversary of the founding of the Sisters of Charity

So let us fly away, fly away home into the depths of our souls where God awaits, where questions are not asked, where we are always welcome, always awaited, where we hear and recognize our mother tongue. (Rumi)

Gathering song:

Ubi caritas et amor

Ubi caritas, Deus ibi est!

Prayer of the promise:

First voice: Go into the land that I will give you, says our God. A land of promise, a place of new beginnings, a home of your own.

Second voice: By night and day, in health and sickness, in abundance and poverty, I have sought you, says our Elizabeth. And always, like the cloud and the fire of old, you have gone before me, my support and my sustenance.

I have left all, risked all, endured all for the sake of your love.

And here, in this Valley, on this day, my exile ends.

I am home at last.

And from this blessed place and time generations of women will rise up and call me Mother, will call each other Sister, and will name the poor, family. Thus-

"Having been brought to Light and Liberty- guide me also with thy Almighty hand through the dangers of my pilgrimage... that I may be associated with them who have left us here the Te Deum of Joy, and be permitted to join with that which they will resound to thee throughout eternity."

Song of the pilgrim: (Psalm 84)

Refrain: Now is the time, here is the place. God's will- our cloud by day, our pillar of fire by night. Wherever we are is home for us.

Right side: How I love your dwelling place, Loving God! How my soul yearns and pines for your abode! All that is within me sings for joy to you, the living God. The sparrow has finally found its home, the swallow a nesting place- your altars, O my God.

Left side: Happy are those who dwell in your house and praise you all day long. Happy those whose strength is in you; they have courage to make the pilgrimage!

Right side: As they go through the Valley of the Weeper, they make it a place of springs, clothed in generous growth by early rains. They dwell within the peace of the Most High; they make their way by strength to strength, they live with integrity.

Left side: Now look on us, God our Comforter, and be kind to your chosen ones. Only one day in your courts is more to be desired than a thousand elsewhere. For you, God, are our sun and our shield, bestowing grace and glory. Beloved, happy those who put their trust in you!
(Psalm adapted from the psalms of Nan Merrill and Nancy Schreck, OSF)

Refrain: Now is the time, here is the place. God's will our cloud by day, our pillar of fire by night. Wherever we are is home for us.

Blessings for the Homecoming:

First voice: If you make my word your home you will indeed be my disciples, you will learn the truth, and the truth will set you free.
(John 8: 31-32)

Second voice: Do not let your hearts be troubled. Trust in God still, and trust in me. There are many rooms in my Father's house... I am going to prepare a place for you, and after I am gone and prepared you a place I shall return to take you with me, so that where I am you also may be.
(John 14:1-3)

Third voice: Those who love me will keep my word, and my Father will love them and we will come to them and make our home with them.
(John 14: 23)

Fourth voice: Make your home in me as I make mine in you. Remain in my love.

(John 15:4, 9)

(Translations from the Jerusalem Bible)

Spend a few moments pondering the meanings of promise, pilgrimage and homecoming in the life of Elizabeth and the early community, and in our lives today.

Sharing of reflections

In response to these words of Elizabeth let us pray: Te Deum laudamus- we praise you O God!

We know certainly that our God calls us to a holy life, that He gives us every grace; that this grace is able to carry us through every obstacle and difficulty.

God has given me a great deal to do and I hope always to prefer His will to every wish of my own.

O Lord, keep us in your way, direct us in your paths, recall our wanderings, make us hear your voice with gladness and rejoice in your salvation.

Knowing as I so well know your heart's desire to serve Our Lord, I can say nothing to you but keep well to what you believe to be the grace of the moment. You will often be at a stand for what is best in a situation so new, but only do your best... and leave the rest to our dear God.

Be united as true Sisters of Charity; be faithful to your rule; be children of the Church.

Closing:

Saint Elizabeth Ann, we honor you and your companions today. We remember your journey, your courage, the blessings that are ours because of you. Keep us close to Jesus and Mary. Keep us faithful to the spirit of charity as we travel the uncertain road into our future. In humility and simplicity may we seek God's will in all we do. And in all things let us be thankful! We ask this in the name of Jesus. Amen

