



December 13, 2009
Third Sunday of Advent

Dear Friends,

We are already beginning the Third Week of Advent! Can you believe it?

The three readings today each proclaim "GOOD NEWS."

The Old Testament reading reminds Jerusalem to be joyful for "The Lord, your God, is in your midst, a mighty Savior." St. Paul's letter to the Philippians says "The peace of God, that surpasses understanding, will guard your hearts and minds." And John the Baptist, in Luke's gospel, told the crowds, "One mightier than I is coming. He will baptize you with the Holy Spirit and fire." GOOD NEWS!

GOOD NEWS nourishes and nurtures a positive household, a cohesive community and a just society. This weekend every parish, in the nation, will be telling GOOD NEWS, the story of Religious Women in these United States. Since the start of our nation, Women's Religious communities have been the backbone of our country's educational systems, hospitals, parish life, social works, elder care, prison ministry, legislative change, justice work, and work in foreign countries where injustices prevail. This is not a story of what was ... it is very much the reality of what is. This is the GOOD NEWS! Let's celebrate these women!

Here is a possibly unknown fact:

Women's religious communities, for many years received only a small stipend or food in return for their ministry in schools, hospitals, etc. With a vow of poverty, the sister does not receive a pay check in her name, thus Social Security was not an option, therefore, no retirement payment. The religious congregation received the stipend. About twenty years ago, the women treasurers of Religious communities presented, re-presented, and re-presented over several years a proposal to award Social Security to each sister based on a flat rate of 'cost of living.' Today, every retired sister receives a small monthly amount that goes into the general fund for living and medical expenses.

Today's reality:

Every religious woman who served the people of God for many years deserves to be cared for with dignity as she grows elderly. The cost of this care is great! The GOOD NEWS is that you can help.

Do you have memories of a Sister who taught you? A Sister who cared for you when sick? A Sister who guided your spiritual growth? A Sister who offered leadership? A Sister who led you in Justice works? A Sister who was with you at a time of death, birth, celebration? What is her name? Tell us GOOD NEWS about her!

Sister Florence was a Sister of the Poor. I helped her at the "Home for the Elderly." Sister Florence was about 5 feet tall with sparkling blue eyes and wrapped up in a black habit. We cleaned floors, reorganized cupboards, prayed to St. Joseph for food, talked about everything, and laughed a lot. She even came to our house begging for money sometimes. She was a bit mysterious to me, but at the same time so very real! She just plain oozed with love for what she was doing. I smile just thinking about her and thank God for her moments in my life. I am a better person because of those encounters. She is my GOOD NEWS!

Please be generous and support the Religious Retirement Fund. It may support your favorite Sister!

In Jesus and Mary,

Sister Barbara