

Thoughts from the Garden – February 2016

It wasn't late, but it was dark. I was headed to the wake service of Sister John Raymond, General Superior of the congregation during the time I was born. I stepped out onto a pathway I have traveled hundreds of times before and was enveloped by the night. I could see the light of the Honey House glowing behind me, but I could not see the ground beneath me or even my own feet. It was a strange sensation to be in a place so familiar yet rendered unrecognizable by the darkness. I took each step, trusting the earth to hold my journey, trusting my body to show me the way. The smell of winter was fresh, and the cool air wrapped me in a gentle caress. The night was quiet, though sounds of neighbor and nature occasionally chimed in from different directions. Unable to see anything in my immediate environment, I looked up. The night was clear and crisp, and Orion the Hunter was prominent in the sky. I continued step after carefully placed step when far in the distance, yet right before me, I witnessed a shooting star.



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I was surprised and delighted. My heart rose like champagne bubbles within me in response to what I had seen before my brain comprehended it. I thanked God for the darkness; were it not for my black surroundings, I would have missed this blaze in the night.

This particular evening, on a familiar pathway, yet in the midst of the unknown, I experienced tangibly the truth of where I stand in my life as a Sister of St. Joseph. I know where I am - held in existence by the God of life and love. I can feel my whole-self here, invited to surrender to this moment, to each moment, to allow myself to be wrapped in the caress of life. Behind me I can see vaguely our congregational past, illumined by the stories of those who lived it and with whom I share this journey. I will likely be headed to many more wakes and will say many more farewells trusting that in every end are planted seeds of new beginnings.

As I walk this path, my ears are alert and are ever more sensitive to the cries that surround me. I can hear pain, suffering, violence and oppression from every direction, even the earth beneath my feet groans in anguish. From where I stand, I can touch only a few, and I take each step with gentleness and compassion as my prayers reach out into the darkness to embrace every tear.

In the darkness and uncertainty of these times, I cannot see what lies before me or where my feet will land. I only know that the terrain will shift and curve, and if I am faithful to now and to my next single step, the twists and turns will unfold naturally before me. I know also that God is in each step and drawing me onward.

Much is revealed in the darkness if I allow myself to be opened, from toe to head, and listen, wholly embodied. Though my pathway cannot be seen, I step. Though I do not know where I am headed, I trust. Though I don't understand the mystery that holds me here now, I hope. And in the distance, yet right before me, a shooting star.