



Seeking God - A Different Life !

For over a hundred years women have followed a specific spirituality in the footsteps of St Benedict and John Bede Polding OSB the first Archbishop of Australia. Initially in Australia but now in Japan, the Philippines and Kiribati, women have chosen to understand this Benedictine Spirituality through the lens of the parable of the Good Samaritan. What, then, does it mean to live as a women who vows to follow this path, to live this spirituality, as a Sister of the Good Samaritan? How do the Vows that a Sister makes at her profession (a public ceremony where she makes her vows) impact on how she lives and who she becomes?

On a personal level, a perpetually professed Sister of the Good Samaritan, dedicates her life to the ongoing seeking of God, as revealed to us in Jesus Christ. For her, God is not dead. God is indeed alive and active in her life and in the lives of all people. In fact, she sees that God is alive in all of creation. Her daily search for God is evident in the living out of the values found in the Gospel stories, especially that of the Kind Samaritan. She encounters God in her daily prayer, in lectio, the sacred reading of Scripture, in participating in the prayer of the Church – the Work of God – by allowing the psalms, God's poetry, to wash over her morning and evening, every day. Then this is expressed in and through how she responds to the call to minister to others.

At her profession a Good Samaritan Sister make three vows that link back to St Benedict. They are Obedience, Stability and Conversion of life.

The core of these vows for Benedict is Obedience. In today's world the understanding of the word 'obedience' is quite different from an appreciation of this vow. Many would think that to be obedient is to be weak willed and incapable of making decisions; of being totally dependant of the whim of another. However, the vow of Obedience is an invitation to listen deeply to God, to others and to self and then to decide on what action is appropriate. Obedience is the opposite of individualism as it invites us to seek the common good though collaboration with others. Such collaboration requires a thoughtful maturity and a true humility. Such listening enables the Sister to hear another at a deep level. Her ministry is always in response to the needs of others.

The vow of Conversion of life is about the willingness to enter into the life-long process of spiritual and personal growth. It is a commitment to a specific way of life. It asks for trust in a forgiving and compassionate God who calls each of us to grow each day into the fullness of what it means to be human. It is the opposite stance of many in our society today who believe that happiness is achieved by self-assertion and dominance over others. Such conversion enables a sister to accept her own reality and so she can accept the reality of another without judgement.

The vow of Stability seems surprising in a world that is changing by the minute. How can one be stable in such a dynamic universe? Yet, this is not a vow by which one stands still. It invites the vowed Sister to remain in relationship – in relationship with her sisters and her God within this unstable world. It is a call to 'hang in there' when it would be easier to run away from self and from others.

This act of profession is an act of faith, of love and of trust. It is an act which recognises God as the author of life. It is an act which identifies one's own human strengths and limitations as gift from God. It is an act which affirms God as God. It states that God does matter. It is a 'yes' to God with all the inherent risks that life will bring, with all the uncertainties about one's future. It is an act by which we undertake to live a simple lifestyle, to hold all things in common and to give up the right to administer personal ownership of property or other goods. It is a life of consecrated chastity dedicated to the following of Christ and in service of God's people. It is an act of courage, because it declares that one can live a life full of meaning and that one can be happy living a life contrary to the prevailing paradigm.