

# Who, Then, Shall We Be?

Foundation Day Prayer - October 24, 2024

Call to  
Prayer

Today we celebrate Foundation Day in the midst of global and local chaos. The fierce urgency of our time is right before us. Boldly, we dare to dream of better times.

“Dreaming asserts a refusal to be confined to the options that are given us. Dreaming is a strong declaration of “none of the above!” Dreaming is a refusal to be limited by the evidence that is before us. Dreaming is a refusal to live within the limits of the status quo. In dreaming, we transcend the horizon of the present and dwell, however briefly, in the land of possibility. We imagine an alternative, a new way of being, that can, if nurtured, make us transformative agents of and for a new creation.”<sup>1</sup>

**Song:** ‘Hold on to Hope’ – Music and lyrics by Kathy Sherman, CSJ:

[Music & Lyric File](#)

[Lyric File Only](#)

**Community Sharing:**

**Our history of asking “Who, then, shall we be?”**

- 1. What do you think** Bishop Wittmann and Fr. Job dreamed about in their deliberations, “Who, then, shall {they} be?” while writing a preliminary draft of the rule and constitution for the guidance of the Sisters?
- 2. The content of Mother Theresa’s rule** for her fledgling congregation, submitted to Rome for approval in 1852, differed from Wittmann’s and Job’s draft. In her dreaming for the congregation, “Who, then, shall we be?”, what do you imagine her dreaming?
- 3. Recall a time** in your lifetime when the congregation asked “Who, then, shall we be?” What did it cost you to engage the question? What were you freed for? Where did it take the congregation?



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<sup>1</sup> Rev. Bryan N. Massingale: Our Time Is Holy: Lamenting and Dreaming in an Interim Time; keynote address at the 2024 Leadership Conference of Women Religious (LCWR) Annual Assembly, page 10.

## Prayer of Grief, Lament and Dream

**Leader:** In August 2024, the LCWR engaged its religious leadership in the same question, “Who, then, shall we be?”<sup>2</sup> With the spirit of our ancestors calling us into the future, let us dream of a space for the new to emerge. “Who, then, shall we be”?

**Leader:** Today, 191 years after our founding, we are claiming our prophetic **identity** because the blood of our foundresses, and the spirit of Jesus flow in our veins. We do not conform quietly to the systemic problems of our day.

**Community Member (CM) 1:** Who then shall we be?

**All:** We are and shall be prophetic contemplative women and men, ready to address the ills of our time.

**Leader:** The ‘new’ we long for is yet unseen and emerging. We journey in darkness.

**CM 2:** Who then shall we be?

**All:** We are women and men willing to walk in the darkness, both waiting patiently and acting courageously.

**Leader:** In the work of **transformation**, we know that our congregation and local community can be transformed only to the degree that each member is willing to be transformed. We can’t perceive what newness will come, so we support one another in growth.

**CM 3:** Who then shall we be?

**All:** We are women and men who will stay in liminality for as long as it takes, and then when ready to move - we move.

**Leader:** In struggling to define the meaning of **community** in our time, we want to find places where we can tell our stories, examine what it means to be together and decide how we will together show kindness to our world.

**CM 4:** Who then shall we be?

**All:** We are women and men who “strive to be credible witnesses of universal communion through deepening our efforts to live as an intercultural faith community of one mind and one heart.”<sup>3</sup>

**Leader:** Recalling the powerful stories of Bl. Theresa and M. Caroline of living in **turbulent times**, we accept that it is now our turn to be brave. In faith, we are women who do bold things for God’s people in some of the most troubled spots in the world and our cities. We have been developing international and intercultural skills.

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<sup>2</sup> The themes and responses in the Prayer of “Grief, Lament and Dream” are taken and adapted from: Nancy Schreck, OSF: “Then who shall we be?”; Outstanding Leadership Award Acceptance Speech at the LCWR 2024 Annual Assembly

<sup>3</sup> The Call and Acts of the 25<sup>th</sup> General Chapter

**CM 5:** Who then shall we be?

**All:** We shall be global citizens.

**Leader:** We wonder what **hope** looks like when so much around us is loss, fracture and destruction. We hear the call to go where others don't want to tread. We are called to create new possibilities in the face of despair.

**CM 6:** Who then shall we be?

**All:** We shall be women and men of hope.

**Leader:** We realize that each time is a new time. **Leadership** requires to be nimble in thinking and in practice to approach the challenges and engage opportunities of our time in creative, loving and prophetic ways.

**CM 7:** Who then shall we be?

**All:** We shall be women and men who “foster in others qualities of leadership which enable them to exert a Christian influence within society.”<sup>4</sup>

**Leader:** We desire to be fed on what gives us life, what stokes our mission with the fire of passion, and leads us to new and creative ways to bring life.

**CM 8:** Who then shall we be?

**All:** We shall be women and men creating a new future, unafraid of what the future holds.

## *Prayer*

Creator God, you plant your dreams into the evolution of our consciousness. So, we dream inspired by our faith. With Jesus the Christ, we dream of a world where no one lacks because of race, gender, colour, creed, accent, or because of who they love, how they love and how they seek for love. **We Grieve. We Lament. And then, we Dare to Dream.** We dare to dream **boldly**. To dream **audaciously**. To dream **subversively**. For in the face of war, environmental catastrophe, xenophobia, nationalism and violence, we need more imagination, more hope. Holy Spirit, invite us, summon us, - to attune and attend to the realm of the Spirit which we encounter in all matter. Mary, mother of the congregation, intercede for us, for we desire, like you, to be a gracious opening to the new era that is struggling to be born. Future generations depend on it.<sup>5</sup>

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<sup>4</sup> You Are Sent, General Directory 35

<sup>5</sup> Rev. Bryan N. Massingale: Our Time Is Holy: Lamenting and Dreaming in an Interim Time; keynote address at the 2024 Leadership Conference of Women Religious (LCWR) Annual Assembly. Adapted from page 11.

## *Closing Blessing*

“May no one cast into the grave after me the accusation that I have undertaken too much here, that I have begun too grandly and extended the work of God too widely. The future will give a fuller explanation.”<sup>6</sup>

# *Happy Foundation Day!*



The Office of Mission Formation thanks Sr. Celeste Reinhart, SSND, for her collaboration in producing the 2024 Foundation Day Prayer.

Graphic Design by Laura Stafford

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<sup>6</sup> Blessed Theresa, letter 736