

Sister Charmaine's 2021 Easter Message to SSND Ministry Boards

Hello and welcome. I am Sister Charmaine Krohe, Provincial Leader of the Atlantic-Midwest Province of the School Sisters of Notre Dame. We are still deep into the Lenten season as I record this message to accompany you into and through the 2021 Easter time. You may find reason, that Easter this year is a 'hard sell'. Even though the hope that comes with the vaccine is now tangible, we still lament the lingering pandemic, over a half million deaths and numerous injustices in our society and the world. We may sometimes wonder if our efforts ever make a difference.

However, let us not forget that Easter started early in the morning, while it was still dark, the tomb in disarray and Mary of Magdala standing outside the tomb weeping. This scene is a far cry from the "Alleluia" sung in a swelling crescendo that we associate with Easter. Reaching deep into our spiritual heritage, we draw on the wisdom of St. Augustine. He preached often about Easter and the Easter Alleluia. In fact, he is credited with the saying "**We are Easter people, and Alleluia is our song.**"

In the time of Blessed Theresa and Mother Caroline, the predominant theology of the Church focused more on the Cross than on the Resurrection. In their letters they interpret their experiences more through the lens of suffering, and references to the Resurrection are far and few. What stood out however, was, that they were **Women of Encounter**.

In the encounter with the people in the cities and villages they travelled to, in the stories they heard from bishops and priests, they saw and felt the children's pain. They witnessed the hopelessness, and their need moved them to the core to reach out with compassion, to open their heart and throw a life-line. In doing so, they shared great love, a love they replenished at night from a well-spring of ardent prayer and their life in community with the other sisters. This prepared them for the next day to go out to accompany people from hopelessness to what is possible. In that way, they circulated God's love through their heart to the people and back.

The way they lived and served, can be seen as the **Easter way-of-life**. Their life and work witnessed enormous faith, much bravery and perseverance in the face of setbacks, misunderstandings and difficulties of many kinds. God's concern was the only concern of their hearts. Such fidelity grew their vision that encouraged so many others to join them. Clearly the power of their stories speaks of the power of the Resurrection. Theresa and Caroline, undoubtedly, were **Easter Women**.

The grace of their stories continued in the School Sisters of Notre Dame over the centuries through today as they expanded in Europe, North-America and indeed the whole world, teaching in classrooms and boardrooms, educating and mentoring in traditional and evolving ways, committing to the dignity of life and the care of all creation today. The sisters gone before us, those in active ministry and the ministry of prayer and presence today, and including our Associates and staff, witness to the power of the resurrection, too, in and through the trials of our own time. It is our daily commitment and prayer to bring the transformative grace of the SSND charism of unity to the challenges currently facing our interconnected reality.

But the story does not stop here. The story keeps unfolding and includes **you!** The story continues **with you** as board members of an SSND sponsored or co-sponsored ministry. **You, too, are called to be Easter men and women, and witness to the power of the resurrection.** Our ministries remain steadfast amidst the dire circumstances of our time, and they are a witness not only to the sister's

faith, hope and love, but to **your** faith, hope and love. **Your work on the board** is the work of making the resurrected Christ visible to a world much in need of it. In this work, we do experience the cycle of dying and rising to new life.

-Pause-

Process for reflection and sharing.

I invite you once again to take a few prayerful moments to consider these questions and jot down your thoughts:

1) Blessed Theresa and Mother Caroline were described as **Women of Encounter**.

How am I a woman or man of Encounter? How do I identify with the experience of those I encounter? How does it lead me to action?

2) *How am I an **Easter man or woman**? How does our board give witness to the Resurrection?*

Then I would ask your board chair to lead you in a bit of sharing, with your neighbor at the table, or with your whole board—and record the ideas that may inspire unity among you and growing as a board that speaks to the power of the resurrection!

Please pause the video, and when you've completed your sharing, turn it back on. Thank you.

Resume video / Closing

Welcome back! As leader and on behalf of our provincial council we thank you for your service on an SSND sponsored or co-sponsored ministry board and assure you of our prayer for you. Let your prayer at the beginning of your board meetings be the well-spring that carries the work of the board and the unity among you. May this be your song. And 1,600 years after St. Augustine, may **you** be credited with saying **"We are Easter people, and Alleluia is our song."**

Have a *Happy Easter!*