

Change of Leadership Blessing for Shalom Retreat Center

July 25, 2011

Reflection by Sr. Pat Farrell, OSF



Sr. Margaret Jungers, OSF



Sr. Marci Blum, OSF

This evening as we gather the context of our celebration is the event of the passing of the leadership for Shalom Retreat Center from Marg Jungers to Marci Blum. It is a moment for the congregation to mark with special attentiveness and gratitude. As we honor both Marg and Marci, we also gratefully acknowledge tonight the presence of the Shalom staff that is at the heart of the ministry there. And, as always, we turn to today's Scripture for guidance and wisdom to know how to interpret this moment.

The first reading from Corinthians speaks of the treasure we hold in earthen vessels. As we hear that, isn't yesterday's reading still ringing in our ears, speaking of finding a treasure hidden in a field and selling all to acquire it. We have found a treasure. Something of great value has been entrusted to us. So now what? We're invited to sell everything, wager our very lives, on the Reign of God, to have our hearts set on fire making this Reign of God a reality in our world. But we don't have to read very far today to hear the challenge. We're afflicted in every way possible, persecuted, struck down, constantly delivered over to death so that the life of Jesus might be made manifest. In other words, there's a cost involved here. Perhaps that's because what is a treasure to the followers of Jesus is a stumbling block to others who do not have eyes to see or ears to hear.

While Jesus' enthusiastic followers are inquiring about their place at his right or his left, Jesus asks: "Can you drink the cup?"---Jesus promises, in fact, that in following him they **will** drink the cup. That's a given. At the same time, Jesus' last, loving directive is a clear legacy and call: Serve. Simply serve. Focus on the needs before you. Serve without acclaim, in hidden, daily ways, without fanfare, without making your importance felt, as Francis and Clare would do.

Marg, does that sound like 10 years as director of Shalom? There is a job description with the nice title, Director of Shalom Retreat Center. But there are many things that Marg has done that are not listed in the job description: filling in at the kitchen, making beds, turning off lights and heat. There are other things that are in the job description that don't necessarily make one's importance felt, like asking for money, in the tradition of Mother Xavier and our early, begging sisters.

Marg, there have been abundant blessings and rich spiritual fruit, and there has also been a cost. We are grateful to you for both and we celebrate the richness of these 10 years and your gracious leadership. Thank you. And Marci, we are enormously appreciative to you for your generous spirit, and for the energy, enthusiasm, and many gifts you bring to Shalom. We entrust to you with great confidence the spiritual ministry of Shalom and we promise you all our love and support.

To both of you, we repeat the final words of today's first reading: "Indeed, everything is ordered to your benefit, so that the grace bestowed in abundance may bring greater glory to God because they who give thanks are many." We are among the many and we give thanks.