

**Sr. Renae Hohensee, OSF**  
**Homily ~ Final Profession of Vows**

August 7, 2010

*Reflection by Sr. Marge Staudt, OSF*

What a joy it is to gather today as community to celebrate with you, Renae. Having your family and friends in our midst for this happy and profound day is added gift and blessing. We extend a special welcome to you, Eleanor and the Hohensee family – and hold in thought and prayer your dad, Don, and others who are unable to be with us today.

We've just listened to the readings you chose, Renae. Thank you for the inspiration and challenges they hold for us. At first glance, I found some rather obvious ideas. For starters, we recognize the passage from Isaiah as the reading for the feast of the Epiphany. This would call us to images of the Gentiles coming from distant places – attracted by the splendor of Jesus. We heard “All gather together; children carried in arms; your hearts will thrill and rejoice....”

What a lovely image of people from afar coming home and tenderly bringing their children to introduce them to a strong faith heritage. This extended family would be the finest aspect of Israel, embodying their hopes and dreams – and a cause for their joy. “People from afar coming home”. This is what we are experiencing today, a blending of families as your family of birth is now blended in a significant way with us – your Franciscan family. Over the years it has definitely been my experience of being warmly welcomed by all of the Hohensees and your family has been one with us in many ways for a long time. Today we just make this reality more formal. No one needs to talk to you about bonding in support and love.

From the Gospel of Matthew there are the familiar references to salt and light. Jesus is speaking to the band of disciples who are the nucleus of his future church. He sees in them the great potential to carry out the mission of making a difference in the world. You noticed that Jesus didn't say – you will become salt/light. No, he spoke in the present tense – “you **are** the light of the world, you are the salt of the earth”. I see that as the challenge to claim and use our gifts – right here, right now. There is no point in waiting until we are better, a step closer to perfect. The gift, the witness is needed now. We Sisters, in our Gathering a week ago were challenged by Simone Campbell. She offered much to ponder, but these thoughts came to mind as I prepared for today. “I can only acknowledge the light of another”, and “Who has told me that I am light?” How different the world would be if our more constant focus was to concentrate on the gifts of others and to tell them of the blessing they are for us. Last night, Renae, you told me of the strong sense of support you felt. May that only grow, and may each of us here live the challenge of speaking often to others of the gift they are.

Today, Renae, you stand before us in this very public posture to make the total offering of yourself to God. This self-gift will be realized and honed through your life shared in community. I see a strong thread of this concept of the communal journey of life in your readings. In Isaiah we heard such terms as “nations, all gather together, your sons, your daughters.” This is not a matter of strong individuals going it alone. Then there are images of salt and light in the gospel. These speak to me of shared life, too. When you think of it, what good is the salt shaker that sits on the dining room table if it just stays there? Salt makes a difference when it is sprinkled on that sweet corn or added to the soup, right? (Now, please, don’t any of you go telling your doctor that I’m encouraging you to add more salt in your diet – but you do get the point, right?) And the candle: we’re all familiar with the call to light one candle against the darkness. Yes, that one candle certainly has an effect, but go back to the vigil service last evening. Renae, you placed your candle on the “lamp stand” – and you placed it there again today. This is as it should be on your special day. We won’t need pictures to remember you holding your candle high in our midst. Don’t ever forget that symbol. Next we saw light taken from your candle and spreading throughout the chapel until you were surrounded by the candles of all of us, your Sisters, family and friends. That was a profound sign of the life you are embracing more fully today. Your journey continues. You speak your vows in our presence, and we rejoice that the light of your life is now united more intimately with ours. In a world that often holds darkness we go forward on the journey of living the Gospel values of Jesus. We have wonderful guides for the journey as we walk in the footsteps of Clare, Francis, and Mother Xavier – and let’s not forget all the women of our congregation and the beloved dead of your family who have gone before us. We walk on in trust because our shared light illuminates the way.

We have been considering “light” in images of gentleness and beauty – a chapel in candlelight, the glow of candlelight for a festive meal. These are lovely, but I would like to conclude by reviewing another quote from our Gathering as an invitation to all of us. May we move boldly in spreading the Christ light, as stated in the words of Judy Cannato from the book Radical Amazement

“To be spark-throwers, to set up flares, to be fierce with fire – this is what our world so desperately needs from us. Let us together claim our light so that once again all creation knows its fundamental nature and deepest truth. What a radically amazing invitation we have received!”

Hold your candle high, Renae, and know that we walk into the future with you, confident that together we will (again, in the words of Judy Cannato)

**“Build up a field of light and love that will help transform the world.”**