



Journey of Enrichment

2011 - 2012 Year of Shared Spirituality

"Put out into deep water,
and let down the nets for a catch." Luke 5,4



ZEAL

This reflection is based on the four movements of Prayer as taught by St. John Eudes, with readings from Old and New Testament, St. John Eudes and St Mary Euphrasia with the hope to rekindle and renew in us the spirit of Zeal so greatly beloved of our two founders.

1. A time for being open and receptive to the call of the Heart of Jesus in my life.

"What does it mean then to help save souls created in the image of God and ransomed with the precious blood of his Son? It is the great work of God...in a word, it is the work of all works, which incomparably surpasses all other works....it is hardly a spark of fire compared to a brightly burning furnace. For divine zeal is nothing else but the ardour of divine love...." (St John Eudes. OC.VII p 49)

Zeal is a word infrequently used today. Yet it is at the heart of our Congregations. It was at the heart of the lives of St John Eudes and St Mary Euphrasia. In their lived experience of mission and ministry they had come to realise that zeal was central to their vocation and to service. Zeal is the dynamism and energy that fires us beyond weariness, disillusionments and apathy in our everyday lives. Zeal is the desire and commitment that urges us on in our prayer lives. It is the enthusiasm that enables us to live and love community life and it is the vision, resilience and courage that shape our work. We are called to live zeal in every aspect of our lives, just as our founders did, in order to make real our mission in the Church, as gifted to us by God.

In her conferences Mary Euphrasia urges us to *'imitate the self-denial, the spirit of charity and zeal of Jesus Himself... Be full of zeal, then to save souls entrusted to your care. Let that be your life's work'* (SME: Conference 6)

2. A time for contemplating and giving thanks for the gift of our charism.

As Religious of the Good Shepherd and Our Lady of Charity, we are committed to live our lives with enthusiasm and zeal. This zeal has two levels. The first level is our attraction to Jesus and our consciousness of being totally and absolutely loved by him. The second level is our joy and enthusiastic energy resulting from that consciousness, which becomes a burning strength in our hearts. We want to reach and touch other people with the warmth of his love. "We want to return love for love."

Zeal comes from an experience of God, his love, forgiveness, healing, and liberation. It is about nakedness before God. Zeal is always **FOR** someone, something, some place, and some ideal. Zeal and mission go hand in hand. They are two sides of the one experience of being found by God, transformed by Him and sent out, continually to others – to mission. We become other focused rather than self-focused. We become Christian community.

If they commit themselves resolutely to the following of this way, the fourth vow can lead them to a deep spiritual experience as well as helping them to persevere in what is a difficult service, and to devote themselves unfailingly to the specificity of their Institute. Their vocation has its origin in the Heart of Jesus. (Const. OLC, Special wishes)

3. A time for living forgiveness.

"How can you be numbered among his members and spouses if you do not desire to conform to Him? Do you wish to have another gospel written for you, or do you want God to send you another Messiah, - a Messiah of honey and roses? Should you prefer to go to paradise by a path other than that which the Mother of God and all the saints travelled to attend it, or else is it

your wish to go there all alone and leave your poor sisters on the road to hell because you are so fastidious that you are afraid to take the trouble to lend them a helping hand?" (Letters of John Eudes No. 53)

"We must be on our guard against tepidity. Our vocation is not for the indolent, who afraid of labour and fearing fatigue are capable of abandoning the works of God." (See SME Conferences 6, 7, 13, 45 & 57)

"You must first of all have charity for yourselves that is to say an ardent zeal for your progress in spiritual life. Without this you could not possess true charity nor true zeal for the souls confided to you and whom you must nourish from the superabundant charity of your own heart. (Conf. SME 63)

Jesus said: 'Zeal for my father's house devours me". Mary Euphrasia could have said these words herself as there was no limit to her efforts, her love, her compassion, her forgiveness when faced with hurt, and disloyalty from within and from without. Such experiences drew from Mary Euphrasia more energy for mission and ministry.

4. A time for giving yourself to Jesus...

Have great zeal, great ardour for the salvation of souls, and to obtain this be devoted to prayer and Holy Communion, for where will you find the graces necessary to fulfil your mission, if not from the author grace Himself? (...) I implore you, my dear daughters; apply yourselves earnestly to the interior life, the hidden life in God, to the spirit of prayer. (SME: Conference 13)

The disciples following the resurrection were full of love, hope, enthusiasm, courage, faith, all words which denote zeal. They became visionaries and activists. The resurrection took place in them. It was an inner experience and their eyes were opened. It was transformative. Suddenly they are transformed, focused on building the kingdom without counting the cost.

"I rejoice greatly, at the outstanding zeal that drives you to promote the glory of God. It is sad to see how in our times the disease called "indifferentism" is spreading in all its forms, not just among those in the world, but also among the members of religious orders..." (St Maximilian Kolbe)

For Reflection and Sharing:

- What difference does zeal make in your life?
- How are you living zeal today? How does it impact your ministry?
- Where is zeal needed today in your context?
- What does modern society say about zeal?

Prayer:

There is a time for everything. Now is the time for me to pause. I make myself available to God. I welcome his call in my everyday life through a particular person, word or specific event... I welcome the desire to be helpful, to succeed in life, to do what I like to do, to act on all that I feel at this time. I welcome this invitation the Lord extends to me, today. "Come, follow me". Amen.

Sacred Scripture (to facilitate prayer):

Psalm 69:9. *Zeal for your house consumes me and the reproaches of those who reproach you have fallen on me.*

John 2:7. *His disciples remembered that it is written. "Zeal for your house will consume me."*

Isaiah 9:7. *Wide is his dominion in a peace that has no end, for the throne of David and for his royal power which he established and makes secure in justice and integrity. From this onwards and forever, the jealous love of Yahweh Sabaoth will do this.*

Gal.4:18 *For I know your readiness, of which I boast about you to the people of Macedonia, saying that Achaia has been ready since last year. And your zeal has stirred up most of them.*