

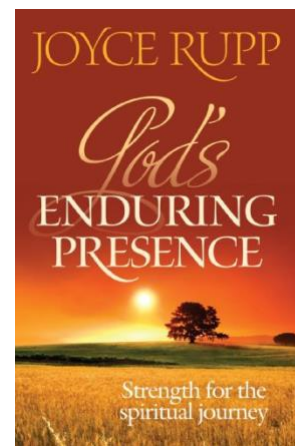


Missionary Franciscan Sisters of the Immaculate Conception

Dear Sisters,

28th November 2018

In September I made my Retreat at Ards Friary Retreat Centre in Donegal, Ireland. The theme of the retreat was 'Walking with the Mystics'. We were reminded that we are all called to be mystics. I invite you during this Advent time, this time, of hope and anticipation, to spend more time, as the title of Joyce Rupp's book reminds us, in *God's Enduring Presence*. I glanced through the pages of Joyce's book to find some inspiration on the season of Advent for this letter. Joyce speaks of Advent as a time for renewing hope. She writes:, *Hope-filled people inspire and boost the enthusiasm of others*. Are we persons full of hope?



Hope is the longing in the hearts of so many asylum seekers and migrants today as they seek to find places of refuge. Like Mary and Joseph looking for a place for the birth of Jesus, they too found that doors were closed to them.

Countries have locked their borders, 'Newcomers' are not welcome! Those abused by members of our church are also searching in hope for recognition of the damage that has been perpetrated against them. We need to reach out personally or at least in prayer for the gift of healing and the restoration of peace in their lives.

During this Advent Season I encourage you to reflect on the scriptures to find the messages of hope given to us by God. This is a time to converse with our God, to spend more time in prayer in anticipation of the Incarnation of Jesus: God-with-us! Joyce Rupp reminds us in the following words of our Visitation Theme: Hope Continues to Bloom!



Advent scriptures daily remind me to regain my spiritual balance. Like a parched land exulting with new life or a deluge of rain causing the dry desert to bloom with flowers, my arid hope comes alive. I discover again that what I want to give up on actually holds the potential for future blooming and Blessing.

The journey of our life and of our Institute is a journey seeking transformation, that is pruning for fruitfulness. It is a daily struggle that we must undertake as Sisters of Penance, so that we can be transformed into the loving presence we are called to be to our sisters in community and to all we encounter in our daily living. Jesus is the hope for all nations. We are called to be hope for all peoples, especially the marginalized.

As consecrated Religious we are always on mission. We never retire from living out our religious consecration and the mission entrusted to us by God, through our foundress Elizabeth Hayes. Her life showed us that *love counts nothing hard it does for the Beloved*. In the Future Direction from the 2016 General Chapter we are asked to *recognize and value the significant contribution to our mission made by the contemplative dimension of the life of all, especially the sick and older Sisters*. In the beginning of this letter to you, I mentioned that we are all called to be mystics. We need to strengthen the contemplative dimension of our lives, to be in constant communion with our God. If we do this, we will be the presence of God to all whom we meet along the journey of our life. The witness of our lives continues after our deaths and so we can be an inspiration for future generations. Our legacy as Missionary Franciscan Sisters will live on into the future and continue to enrich the lives of others.

Wishing you the blessings of this Advent Season!

Pauline Robinson

Sr Pauline Robinson mfc
General Minister



Yes, Hope continues to Bloom!