

*Homily, Sr. Johnette Putnam, OSB
Fr. Meinrad Miller. OSB. 2/9/18*

To all the family and friends of Sr. Johnette, I offer my prayers on this day marked with confidence and trust in God's goodness as we gather to bid farewell to a sister, Prioress, Federation-President, retreat giver, relative, spiritual mentor and friend. On this Eve of the Feast of St. Scholastica, in the week of Mardi Gras, we gather to pray, and to rejoice.

As a novice, I recall Owen often telling me that monastics are not cookie cut figurines, but each of us brings our character to the life together. Certainly when we think of Sr. Johnette we do not think of some pre-cut and molded figure. God does a good job of giving us a glimpse of God's inner working, when we see the rich array of creation, and of characters and personalities. God used a lively, athletic, talented young sister to help guide many through the years of renewal and updating. Elected Prioress at the ripe age of 35, and president of the federation at the age of 45, others saw in her the ability to help foster renewal and updating.

In her own contribution to the landmark work, *Climb along the Cutting Edge, an analysis of change in Religious Life*, Sr. Johnette authored the section on *The Development of a Theology of Monasticism*. In that section she wrote that Benedict's monastics *had rejected the false values of power, prestige, and wealth*.

The readings chosen today show us this new vision of life, not rooted in power, prestige and wealth, but in an encounter with the one who loves us. And in that encounter being so moved that we become agents of love, and change in a world often stuck in a culture of murmuring, resentment and fear.

In speaking of the contemplative dimension of our life, Sr. Johnette wrote *In this way the service she (the American Benedictine woman) renders is an expression of who she is and manifests to society the fact that life becomes whole only through the contemplative experience*.

This contemplative experience is reflected by the reading from the Song of Songs: *for now the winter is past, the rain is over and gone. The flowers appear on the earth; the time of singing has come, and the voice of the turtle-dove*.

When society tells us to *don't just stand there but do something*, the monastic tells the world *don't just do something, stand there*. To be in the presence of the One who instills a song in my heart, and calls me beyond

the ugliness of darkness and sin, to the light of a new spring, a new dawn of mercy on the earth.

With St. John in the second reading we can truly say that *we have known and believe the love that God has for us*. It is hard to share a love that one does not know. So much of spiritual mentoring and accompanying on the journey is allowing people to truly acknowledge this. We sabotage our own growth with negativity and doubt. Sr. Johnette was able to show people by her positive attitude that this love God has for us is no mere theory, but a living reality.

In her final years, Johnette who helped so many others was helped by them. She was able to live what she had taught over the years. For her, Christ was not just a figure from the past, but the One leading us into our bright future. With Thomas in the Gospel we often say: *How can we know the way?* At that Jesus says to us what He said to the disciples *'I am the way, and the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me. If you know me, you will know my Father also. From now on you do know him and have seen him.*

Each day in the monastery we see the face of Christ in our sisters, in the guests, in the daily routine. Now we rejoice that Sr. Johnette who loved Jesus is with him.

the light of a new day, a new dawn
of the world.

With the dawn of the new day, we can find a new hope
and a new faith. It is hard to find a new
faith, but it is worth it. We must have faith
in the future, in the people, in the world.
We must have faith in the love of God, for
it is the only love that is true.

In the past, we have seen many others who
have been led to the light. We have seen
many who have been led to the light by
the love of God. We have seen many who
have been led to the light by the love of
their neighbors.

At this time, we are in the light. We are
in the light of the love of God. We are
in the light of the love of our neighbors.
We are in the light of the love of the world.
We are in the light of the love of the
future.

Let us see the light. Let us see the light
of the love of God. Let us see the light
of the love of our neighbors. Let us see
the light of the love of the world. Let us
see the light of the love of the future.