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Report KDCCW Spirituality Commission

Sister John Catherine Kennedy, Chair

This year has been a year of suffering for all those who weep over “Jerusalem.” It is time to be women of hope, like those strong Old Testament women who put their trust in God and were not disappointed and like Our Blessed Mother who allowed the LORD to accomplish the seemingly impossible in her. Pope Benedict XVI wrote: “the one who has hope lives differently.” Hope is the virtue by which we firmly trust that God Who is all powerful and faithful to His promises will in His mercy give us eternal life and the means to attain it. Hope turns us expectantly towards the LORD, aware of our own desperate limitedness in the face of our own and others’ sinfulness. The Church needs our hope. Our priests and lay faithful and families need the witness of our hope. Because we know the LORD is ultimately victorious, we can have a deep inner peace, even as the battle rages, even through suffering, humiliation, and grief. There is no wound He cannot heal. This kind of hope only comes from Him. We cannot manufacture it, only cultivate it, and beg for more from Him Who is the only source.

The theme that the spirituality reflections have focused on this year is Mercy—a theme intimately connected with the convention theme of Reflecting God’s Joy. Though bleared and smeared by all that is rotten in this valley of tears, as Gerard Manley Hopkins wrote, “There lives the dearest freshness deep down things.” We have sinned and transgressed by departing from Him, but He has come in after us, and mercy flows from His pierced heart. And so, we can reflect His joy—joy that triumphs over sin and weakness because it has vanquished the evil one and broken the chains of death by the Paschal Mystery. Joy is the fruit of charity—when God is our all and everyone else is loved in and for Him, joy is ours. The joy we are invited to radiate by the indwelling of the Trinity in us is the joy of the Risen One, who willingly bore our infirmities and took them in perfect obedience to the Cross. We embrace His Cross in certain hope of the redemption. The only real joy is joy from a love that is willing to embrace the Cross.

A number of parishes or deaneries have held lovely retreats or evenings of recollection this year. More such events are in the planning stages in various parishes. Women at these events seem very grateful for the opportunity to come together and to pray and reflect on the Christian life and the mysteries of our faith. Throughout the diocese many beautiful initiatives to strengthen individuals, families, and parishes in prayer are being undertaken. The diocese was blessed to welcome renowned spiritual writer Fr. Jacques Phillipe for a pre-Lenten retreat. Those who missed the retreat (including me) can try to make up for it by reading his excellent books.

At the convention this year, we will again be distributing complimentary Magnificats and various other aids to prayer, including holy cards of the Angelus. Renewing the practice of praying the Angelus is a NCCW resolution. We will have prayer cards with the names of our bishop and priests to remind us to pray for them, as we did last year. They need our spiritual motherhood even more now as so many

battle discouragement and other grave spiritual dangers in the face of all that has happened. We must pray for them!

It has been a privilege to serve as your chair and be a part of your organization! God bless you.

The world is charged with the grandeur of God.

It will flame out, like shining from shook foil;

It gathers to a greatness, like the ooze of oil

Crushed. Why do men then now not reckon his rod?

Generations have trod, have trod, have trod;

And all is seared with trade; bleared, smeared with toil;

And wears man's smudge and shares man's smell: the soil

Is bare now, nor can foot feel, being shod.

And for all this, nature is never spent;

There lives the dearest freshness deep down things;

And though the last lights off the black West went

Oh, morning, at the brown brink eastward, springs —

Because the Holy Ghost over the bent

World broods with warm breast and with ah! bright wings.

-Gerard Manley Hopkins