Called by God ~ Sent by God

Leader: We gather today to honor Mother Veronica, foundress of the Bernardine Franciscan Sisters. She was a woman of courage, humility and deep faith who trusted implicitly in Divine Providence. With grateful hearts we remember all that she means in the lives of the sisters and what she has done in her life as she responded to God's call.

We pause to remember God's presence within each one of us and in all of creation we pray:

In the Name of our Creator - God who gathers us as one.
In the Name of Jesus - Emmanuel who frees us from darkness.
In the Name of the Spirit - Companion who animates us.

Hymn: The Summons ~ Kelvingrove

Will you come and follow me
If I but call your name?
Will you go where you don't know
And never be the same?
Will you let my love be shown,
Will you let my name be known,
Will you let my life be grown in you
And you in me?

Will you leave yourself behind
When you but call my name.
Let me turn and follow you
And never be the same.
In your company I'll go
Where your love and footsteps show.
Thus, I'll move and love and grow in you
And you in me.

Lord, your summons echoes true
If I but call your name?
Will you care for cruel and kind
And never be the same?
Will you risk the hostile stare
Should your life attract or scare?
Will you let me answer prayer in you
And you in me?

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Psalm 121
My heart’s eyes behold your divine glory! From where does my help come?
My help comes from you, my God, who created heaven and earth.

You strengthen me, You who are ever by my side!
Behold! You who watch over the nations who will see all hearts awakened to the light!

For You are the Great Counselor; you dwell within hearts,
that we may respond to the universal heart – like the sun that nourishes us by day,
like the stars that guide the wayfarer by night.

In You we shall not be afraid of the darkness, for You are the light of our life.
May You keep us in our going out and coming in from this time forth and forever.

Glory to the everlasting God – Father, Son and Spirit – forever and always. Amen.

Reader 1:
Mother Veronica was called by God

Early in her life, Emily Grzedowska, loved by her parents and family, was sent away
from home to be educated in a boarding school run by the Sisters of the Congregation
of Mary. After finishing school, she joined the congregation which was dispersed by a
governmental decree. Given the name, Sister Veronica, her dream of living convent life
in Poland was shattered with the closing of her cloister during the Russian insurrection.
In the twenty-two years she spent at home, Mother Veronica helped her brother in his
store to gain her livelihood. She knew deeply in her heart that living and working at
home was not the journey that this life was meant to be for her.

In God’s time, Mother Veronica entered the Bernardine Sisters in Zakliczyn where she
delighted in living her prayer life in the cloister. Within a few years of her convent living,
Mother Veronica’s trust in God was challenged when she was asked to go to the United
States with a small group of sisters to teach the Polish immigrant children in Mount
Carmel, Pennsylvania. Open to God’s call to go where she didn’t know the people, the
culture, the language, Mother Veronica, responded with a living faith and a generous
heart. She trusted in God’s plan for her in whatever way it would unfold before her.

Called by God, Mother Veronica and her companions embarked on their missionary
journey to the new land where the newly formed group would grow and flourish under
the shadow of the cross, under the shadow of the almighty.

Silent Reflection
What word, thought or feeling touched your heart that you would like to remember?
Response:
Mother Veronica was called

- to reach out to God in humility in all the adverse situations she encountered
- to follow God in leaving the known realities for the unknown
- to walk in faith and trust that God would provide
- to trust faithfully in the power of God and be humbled with God’s abiding love

Reader 2:
Mother Veronica was sent by God

Upon the arrival of the steamship EMS in New York harbor on October 16, 1894, the first purchases Mother Veronica made in America were a crucifix and a statue of the Sacred Heart. Mother Veronica placed her trust in the Sacred Heart that this pioneer group would be led and protected on their missionary journey.

Faced with significant changes in her new life in America, Mother Veronica had to deal with cultural issues, language barriers, unexpected demanding ministry, and problems caused by distance from the homeland. Mother Veronica’s uncertain health issues had a significant impact on her life and the life of the newly formed community which brought about another significant change in her life.

Midst all of the unforeseen situations of changes of living space, the scarcity of food and limited financial resources, the sisters continued their journey confident that God would always be with them. The poor and the young were welcomed and cared for by the sisters even though they struggled for survival themselves.

The small missionary group gradually increased in number as young women who were inspired by the presence and work of the sisters expressed their desire to join the sisters. Aware of God’s presence with them was a real testament of God’s ever abiding love in their service to the people they were called to serve.

In all her years, Mother Veronica always shared a true and loving concern for the spiritual and physical needs of her sisters. She exemplified trust in God’s Provident Care with her sisters through every step of her way.

Personal / Silent Reflection
How does the story of Mother Veronica tell us about what we are called to do in the world we live in?

Response:
Mother Veronica was sent

- to risk the comfort of her known homeland to new vistas
- to welcome the poor and orphaned
- to serve the immigrant children of Polish families in a new land
to give witness of God’s provident care

**Affirmation:**
As associates, we acclaim who she was and is to us as we remember her today.

*Reader reads the line in bold print, the sisters respond.*

**Mother Veronica, woman of faith,**
- revealed a faith that was firm, strong, simple and sincere, deep and long-lasting in all the circumstances of her life.

**Mother Veronica, woman of the church,**
- responded to the needs of the church in leaving her homeland to answer the call to serve immigrant children in a foreign land.

**Mother Veronica, woman of prayer**
- possessed a profound spirituality with the Eucharist at the heart of her life and a devotion to the Sacred Heart of Jesus and Mary, the Mother of God.

**Mother Veronica, woman of hope,**
- relied on the power of God’s unfailing presence in her life for the promise of the future of the new congregation.

**Mother Veronica, woman of humility,**
- endured the uncertainty about the unknown in a spirit of being sister among sisters.

**Mother Veronica, woman of love,**
- experienced God’s love and lived with a heart of compassion and gentleness with her sisters.

**Mother Veronica, woman of the Franciscan spirit,**
- lived in the contemplative spirit with simplicity and joy.

**Reader 3:**
**We are called ~ We are Sent**

Called by God, as associates we ponder what it means to walk faithfully in the footsteps of Mother Veronica, to make visible in our times, the gift God gave the world in the person of this woman of faith.

We are sent by God to be open to new possibilities of seeing the face of God in new ways, new places.
As associates, we join with the sisters as the legacy of Mother Veronica and her companions who committed their lives to do what was theirs to do in their day.
In gratitude and love, we now do what is ours to do in trusting in the Provident Care of our God.

Reflection / Sharing
What does the charism of trust in Divine Providence given to Mother Veronica look like today?

How do we, as associates, keep the charism alive?

In what ways is the charism recognizable in our lives as associates in these changing times?

Leader:
Together with the sisters, we affirm that we are called and we are sent by God to proclaim the Good News as sister and brother to all and so we say:

Leader reads the line in bold print, the sisters respond.

We are called
❖ to live in faithfulness to the gospel and to the church
❖ to witness to our charism of trust in Divine Providence
❖ to live the Gospel in a spirit of simplicity and joy

Bernardine Franciscan Constitutions 1:4, 2:5

We are sent
❖ to be a living sign of Jesus
❖ to respect the freedom and dignity of those whom we serve
❖ to work with and behalf of the marginalized
❖ to become effective agents for transforming unjust and oppressive structures

Bernardine Franciscan Constitutions 5:35, 36

Closing Prayer
Good and gracious God, we give you thanks for Mother Veronica, who challenges us to trust in the Providence of God. We celebrate our call to be faithful witnesses as women and men of the church of Your presence today. May we be inspired by Mother Veronica who has gone before us to meet the needs of the church in new and creative ways. Help us to recognize You in our daily living of our commitment as Bernardine Franciscan Associates and be bold in proclaiming your Good News of peace and justice in our families, neighborhoods, parish churches and local communities. We ask for continued blessings as we strive to live Your call to proclaim Your unconditional love today.

Sister Mary Sninsky, OSF