

REFLECTION FOR JANUARY 6, 2016

Today is the birthday of the Sisters of St. Francis, Oldenburg. Mother Theresa Hackelmeier overcame all her fears as she traveled on land, and sea and finally arrived here on this very day 165 years ago. Followers of St. Francis are called Franciscans. The Poor Clares receive their name as followers of St. Clare. We sisters and associates might be considered the Hackelmeirs, and we can wear that name proudly because we follow a woman who feared not the raging waters of the ocean but was courageous, resilient, compassionate, loving, and ever so generous.

Can we imagine what it must have been like for Mother Theresa as she lost her companion at boarding time? She would be alone among many unknown passengers for weeks that stretched out into months on the boat. What did she do all day? Ever wonder?

Her arrival in New York at Christmas where she was welcomed by other Franciscans who lived there. What a joy it must have been to get on land and to see others who had come from far away land and would have understood how worn she must have felt. Did they speak German, or was it French or English? No matter, I'm sure they could connect with one another.

Then, on the Eve of the Epiphany when she finally arrived at what would be her destination for the remainder of her years she found a convent still under construction and a small log cabin to live in with three women she had never met. Times, we are told, were tough. Often the house was cold, and the pantry short on supplies. How did they keep themselves committed to the tasks asked of them?

There is always something new I learn when I go back over our history...This time I learned that Mother Theresa was very concerned that the habit should be brown but the material was too expensive so she turned to black. What I didn't know was that Father Rudolf suggested that they wear secular dress for work and study and only wear a habit for prayer. What if Mother Theresa had followed his advice?

The sisters had to be educated so they could educate others. How good of God to send Theresa Dreer from Switzerland who became Sister Antonia. She was well educated and could teach others how to teach. What if she had not followed her call?

And just when things were looking up, along comes the fire testing the new community. Mother Theresa offers the freedom to all to leave the community – none depart. Begging became Mother Theresa's task and, like Francis of old, she did so willingly. What if the community had disbanded?

As you ponder our founding this day just remember that we can overcome all fear if we follow in the footsteps of our foundress.

Maya Angelou ends her book of poetry with a stanza that so fits Mother Theresa. She writes:

And when great souls die, after a period peace blooms, slowly and always irregularly. Spaces fill with a kind of soothing electric vibration. Our senses, restored, never to be the same, whisper to us. They existed. They existed. We can be. Be and be better. For they existed.

Thank you Mother Theresa!

And Happy Birthday to all Hackelmeier Sisters and Associates!