

Reflection for Final Vows

Sister Wendolyn Lopez Sonera

August 3, 2014

Good afternoon!

Buenas tardes y una calurosa bienvenida para la familia y amistades de la Hermana Wendolyn. Es un regalo que ustedes puedan estar aquí hoy para celebrar con Wendolyn y la comunidad.

The gifts of music that we are experiencing here this afternoon speak loudly of "SOMETHING SPECIAL". The liturgical dance, spirited singing...the decorations, the faces of all here gathered: younger and older, Caucasian, Asian and Hispanic faces etched with a reflection of the rich heritage of Santo Domingo, Korea, Germany, America and Peru. This international celebration of the Sisters of Divine Providence seems to be saying: "Wake up world"... for SOMETHING VERY SPECIAL is taking place in this chapel today. The breath of the Spirit is audible. Listen!

Yes, the SOMETHING SPECIAL is Sister Wendolyn's profession of Final Vows. Today we witness her response to take seriously her chosen theme for this Eucharistic Celebration from the gospel of Matthew "the harvest is rich and the laborers few".

Today we witness Wendolyn embodying a "yes" to her vocational call..... A call to leave the nest of personal security, familiar language, cultural preferences, foods and ways of living, to be a disciple of Jesus with the Sisters of Divine Providence forever. She dares to proclaim by her life choice deep trust in God's faithful love, presence and activity with her, and to witness this in simple and prophetic ways.

We are about to hear Wendolyn say "I do! Forever". She will seal these words in her heart.

We celebrate with deep gratitude the presence and abundant gifts of our Provident God to Wendolyn, to us as a Community, and to the Church.

We celebrate the lives and rich heritage of our founders Bishop Ketteler and Mother Marie de la Roche. We rejoice in calling to memory the lives of all our foremothers who enfolded in unique ways the charism of "Providence".

And we give thanks for the echo of commitments spoken by each of us years ago in our personal proclamations: "I do...Forever!" Sealed forever to be for God's people.

Pope Francis has encouraged religious to bear witness to a different way of doing things, of acting, of living, of being prophetic. "It is this witness", Pope Francis reminds us, "that I expect of you as religious.

God has a Mission and we are that Mission. We proclaim to the world our wake up call to live ever more deeply our challenge to be witnesses of the spirit of our congregation..... the spirit of Jesus Christ Himself. **This is what we are celebrating this afternoon.**

Wake up all who gather here today! Sister Wendolyn cries out by her very presence, that the Kingdom of God is here. God's Providence fills her with energy and the fire of the Spirit of Jesus Himself gracing her to profess "I do. I will forever help to keep alive the Mission God entrusts to us".

In selecting **Ecclesiastes for her first reading**, Wendolyn acknowledges that her profession of final vows will undoubtedly bring her face to face with the reality that in her life, consecrated to live the mission and charism of Providence under vows, there will be many seasons that challenge her to repeatedly say "yes". Today, Wendolyn embraces whatever season the secret mystery of Providence will reveal to her in the days to come.

Yes, there will be times for giving birth and for dying, for planting, for healing, times for knocking down and a time for building something new, for tears and laughter. There will undoubtedly be times for mourning and dancing, for loving, for disagreements and surrender, for war and peace.

There will be opportunities for embracing and for discerning in ever deeper ways her call to live the spirit of Jesus in each "now" moment of her life.

Paul, in his letter to the Romans, reminds Wendolyn about God's decision from the outset, to shape the lives of those who love God, along the same lines as the life of Jesus, the Son. God cooperates with all those called according to God's providential designs. God calls Wendolyn by name as one intended to become a true image of Jesus Himself, and to share that gift with the marginalized and oppressed people of our day.

Nothing therefore can come between us and the love of Christ, even if we are troubled or worried or misunderstood or lacking anything. What need we fear?

The secret mystery of God's Providence plan continues to be at work in and through us. With Providence on our side, how can we lose? Regardless of the season of our life experiences, can anything separate us from God's love? Can the Mission God has designed for us to share with the People of God simply disappear? Or using the words of the Sufi poet Haifiz, can we accept that each of us is a hole in God's flute, through which Christ's breath desires to move. How could we leave the song unsung?

In our **Gospel today, (Matthew 16)** we listen to Jesus tell us what is necessary if we want to truly live "our forever" as disciples, stamped with the seal and charism of Providence.

"Anyone who intends to come with me, **has to let me lead.**" "You are not in the driver's seat", Jesus reminds us. "I am". Don't run from suffering or existential un-givens. Embrace them. Enter into the secret mysteries of Providence I unravel for you. Follow me and I will show you how. Don't be in a hurry to go into business for yourself. The People of God need your witness of prophetic presence. Live each moment and respond to the little and big calls I continue to share with you.

Wake up People of God! The power of God is indeed at work in us.

Today we connect our deep story as a Congregation to the missioning that will be taking place through Sr. Wendolyn's profession of final vows.

I believe that Wendolyn's profession of final vows is an explosion of Providence waiting to go off.

I see in this celebration, a manifestation of God as Providence, urging us to live the spirit of Jesus as outlined in our Constitutions in every season of our lives.

Looking ahead, the future is not about anxiety. It's about a clear-eyed embrace of God's abundance and creativity.

We do not need to be anxious about the scenarios we have been pondering in our Assembly. Providence is and will be with us as we discern ways to be passionate about the Mission today and tomorrow, and to be open to the secret mystery plan God is writing in our Providence story.

We thank you Wendolyn for your witness and response to be open to God's writing in our Providence story by saying "Yes.... I do....forever". I want to be a part of the story....forever.

We love you and hold you in our support and prayer, as together each of us recommits our self to be the image of Jesus in living deeply our Providence story and reaching out to be with those who call out to us through their need.

Yes, God! Today **we exalt your Providence, and we recommit ourselves to make your Providence more visible in our broken world.**