

Faithful Witness as Women in the Church

Faithful Women, Birthing Justice

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*It was you who created my inmost self,
and put me together in my mother's womb;
for all these mysteries I thank you:
for the wonder of myself, for the wonder of your work . . .
Psalm 139*

Grey Nuns of the Sacred Heart - creating a compassionate world. Compassion is an eminently feminine word coming as it does from the Hebrew and Arabic root for womb.

Hildegard of Bingen was a Benedictine abbess who lived from 1098 to 1178. She was a mystic, writer, artist, composer, philosopher, polymath, prophet, doctor and pharmacist- hard to live up to! The good news is that she was able to do all this in her time because she realized that all of life was interconnected. Hildegard had a wholistic view of all life. She saw the earth as the womb of life. She was a woman for her time but also one for ours. Like Julian of Norwich she realized that compassion equates with justice. Hildegard wrote: "*When you lack the verdancy of justice, your soul is dry, totally without tender goodness, totally without illuminating virtue.*"

Hildegard's writings and art awaken us to the divine feminine. She recognized that life is creation centered. Likewise, she realized that it is not possible to practice outward justice without looking and working on the inner self first.

In our time, there are many justice issues that face us: climate change, immigration, health issues, racism, workers' rights, prison reform to name but a few. It may seem overwhelming to look at the list and decide we can bring about justice/compassion. Fortunately, as Hildegard reminds us, all is interconnected and to choose one is to impact the others.

We have many modern day women who model justice actions for us:

Ecology - *Greta Thunberg*- an example of youth involvement. *Sister Dorothy Stang* who gave her life to help the people of the Amazon region preserve its ecological balance.

Immigration - *Sister Norma Pimentel* who has worked with border shelters assisting those who seek refuge here.

Health Issues- *Sister Carol Keehan* who helped educate us about the ACA and the importance of its passage. Our own *Sister Rosalie Bertell* whose world travels brought her to help those who were seeking justice from the dangers of radiation.

Racism - *Edna Ferber* - author and *Rosa Parks*- activist.

Workers' Rights - *Dolores Huerta*- an avid advocate for farm workers' rights.

Prison & Death Penalty - *Sister Helen Prejean* whose writings and lectures help us to recognize the injustices in the penal system.

The list is by no means exhaustive! Each brings differing talents to bear in her quest for justice. Likewise, there are many organizations that we can look to for solidarity and community action.

As we search within to discover how to reach outward, perhaps this traditional Celtic prayer can be a guide.

*"I rise to-day:
Might of God for my guidance
Wisdom of God for my guidance
Eye of God for my foresight
Word of God for my utterance
Hand of God for my guardianship
Path of God for my precedence... "*

Like Hildegard, may we move "vigorously toward justice," bringing to fruition our own talents and abilities. This is our challenge! What greater thanks can we offer than to use the gifts we were given to bring to birth compassionate justice in our world.