

Mary Kay's Consecration Service
February 26, 2017

Dancing with God...

After Moses and the Israelites escaped from Egypt and the Egyptians ran into the wall of water at the Red Sea, Moses and the people of Israel sang a song of praise to God for saving them. Miriam, a woman who spoke for the Lord, took a timbrel in her hand. All the women followed her, with timbrels and the women danced. Miriam told the people: "Sing to the Lord, for He is praised for His greatness...."

Gertrude Mueller Nelson, who is a spiritual writer, tells this story about her daughter Annika when Annika was three. One afternoon, Gertrude was sewing. The wastebasket near her sewing machine was filled with scraps of fabric. Annika was fascinated by the pieces of cloth that were there. She began to collect long, bright strips and then she went off. After a few minutes, Gertrude went to find her. Annika was outside in back garden. She had found a long stick and was attaching the strips of fabric to this stick with great big sticky wads of tape. When Gertrude asked Annika what she was doing, Annika replied: "I'm making a banner for a procession." She told her mother. "I need a procession so that God will come down to dance with us." With that, she solemnly lifted her banner to flutter in the wind and slowly she began to dance....

In the lesson from Romans, we read this: "Do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your minds, so that you may discern what is the will of God – what is good and acceptable and perfect."

Friends, by now you are probably wondering what these three stories have to do with one another – and what they have to do with Mary Kay's consecration to the Ministry of Word and Service.

It's all about dancing. Richard Rohr, in talking about the Trinity states that in God there is a flow, a circle dance of Love. He also tells us that God invites us into this dance of love.

Miriam knew that. She accepted God's invitation. She danced. She also invited the people of Israel to dance with her.

Even three year old Annika knew that invitation. She wanted God to dance with her... so she prepared herself and her banner. And she began to dance.

I've known and worked with Mary Kay over the past several years. It's been my privilege to journey with her,- to dance with her - to call her friend and colleague, as she's been in this process of transformation that St. Paul talks about in the letter to the Romans. That transformation began as she grew in her commitment to the work of her congregation. It continued through her commitment to deepening the leadership skills of women and men in ministry. It led her to deepen her own knowledge base through her studies at Luther Seminary and then to deepen her spiritual formation through reading, small groups and spiritual direction. Today, as she is consecrated as a Minister of Word and Service, we as church are giving witness to this transforming of Mary Kay's mind and heart. Today, as she is consecrated a Minister of Word and Service, we are encouraging her to continue in this transformation... to continue to dance with God... but not only with God.

For today, we as church also affirm that Mary Kay is to dance with God's people in all of the ways that God dances with them; with us! During the rite of consecration, a charge is given to Mary Kay...to serve the needy, care for the sick, comfort the distressed. We are consecrating her to bring the music of hope and healing, the dance of love and risk and trust into the lives of those she meets. This dance will be at times filled with joy ... and at times it will be the slow dance of grief and mourning. At times the dance will be hectic and at times it will be leisurely. But whatever the pace, whatever the mood of the dance, we trust that Mary Kay is attuning her rhythm to God's rhythm, dancing into people's lives to bring them God's hope and healing, God's comfort and compassion and more than a little bit of God's joy and God's love.

Mary Kay, thank you for accepting this invitation to dance with God and with God's people.

I can't wait to learn from you some new dance moves!

Alleluia. Amen.