

To Remember My Vocation – A Meditation for a Nurse

This reflection is offered by CHA with the deepest gratitude and utmost respect for the women and men who serve as nurses in the ministry of Catholic health care. Each day you are on the front lines of continuing Jesus' mission of love and healing. Thank you for the large and small ways you transform hurt into hope for those in need.

*In the cool hand of the nurse there is the touch of all life,
the touch of Spirit.*

“Hagia Sophia,” Thomas Merton

Settle yourself.

Deepen and steady your breathing. Gentle your heart. Bring yourself into the present moment.

Imagine.

Jesus is walking along the road to Calvary, carrying his cross. He has been whipped, beaten and has fallen once. It is hot. The crowd is loud. He is surely a mess of pain, betrayal, sweat, blood and dirt. In a moment not remembered in scripture, but recalled in the sixth station of the cross, Veronica steps out from the crowd to care for him.

Moved by compassion for his suffering and fortified by courage in the face of Roman soldiers, Veronica wipes the face of Jesus with her veil.

Imagine this moment in as much detail as you can. The heat and light, the sounds and smells, the crowd, soldiers and the face of Jesus in the hands of Veronica. Imagine the process of wiping his face. Imagine the tender care that Veronica used to clean, but not further injure as she tends wounds she cannot heal on a man marked for death.

The moment closes. He continues his walk toward execution and she steps back into the crowd. Maybe immediately or perhaps when she is preparing the wash, Veronica notices that the image of Jesus' face remains on her veil.

Consider.

- What from Veronica's story stays with you?
- Which patients' faces have imprinted themselves on your heart?
- When have you been cared for by another?
- Why did you become a nurse?

Reflect.

Wiping Jesus' face did not change the outcome of his death, but Veronica brought grace and dignity into his suffering. Her act of compassion stands on its own. Her tender care has been recalled through the centuries, not for its usefulness, but for its love. The first letter to the Corinthians reminds us that whatever we do without love is done in vain.

"If I speak in the tongues of mortals and of angels, but do not have love, I am a noisy gong or a clanging cymbal. And if I have prophetic powers, and understand all mysteries and all knowledge, and if I have all faith, so as to remove mountains, but do not have love, I am nothing. If I give away all my possessions, and if I hand over my body so that I may boast, but do not have love, I gain nothing." 1 Corinthians 13: 1-3

The uniqueness of Catholic health care is found not in the types of services we provide or procedures we offer, it is found in the love and tenderness, compassion and courage with which we serve.

You are Veronica. Each day you take the vitals of Christ, you draw the blood of Christ, you empty the bedpan and visit the homes of Christ. You organize his pills, fluff his pillows, spoon feed him his dinner. You may never know how the everyday service you provide witnesses to the love of God. Yet, trust that as you seek the face of Christ in your patients, their families and your co-workers, they also see the love of God in you.

*For Christ plays in ten thousand places / Lovely in limbs, and
lovely in eyes not his.*

"As Kingfishers Catch Fire," Gerard Manley Hopkins

