

**Sister Joann Caramanico**  
**Rite of Initiation into Novitiate**  
**July 29, 2018**

*Reflection on Matthew 17: 1-8 The Transfiguration of Jesus*

As we accompany Joann this evening during her rite of initiation into the Novitiate, we hear the fervent desire of her heart, “Give me Jesus.” Joann is a lover of God, of music, and of nature in all its beauty—earth and sky, seas and rivers, mountains and hills. How appropriate that she chose this scripture passage tonight—the revelation of Jesus, face shining like the sun, clothes white as light, transfigured — on a most majestic mountain.

Jesus led his three friends on this expedition. While we just listened to Matthew’s version, Luke tells us explicitly that the reason Jesus went up — was to pray. He is aware of the precarious situation in which His ministry has placed him with the authorities. He’s already spoken of his death and rising, and for him right now, it is the question of going to Jerusalem. As with all decisions in his life, he steps apart to consult with his Abba God — to be sure he is still heading in the right direction. Shall he continue to publicly heal, preach and share the good news with the poor? Stay true to Himself and His call? Jesus continues to discern God’s will and God’s way for Him.

What we see next is that His identity and mission are clearly affirmed by God and revealed to His followers. “This IS My beloved son, with whom I am well pleased, listen to Him.”

As Joann begins her novitiate, God continues to reach out to her, tenderly calling her beloved, and helping her to discern God’s plan for her life. Our Constitutions (#111) say, “Each vocation is a unique mystery.” Tonight, we stand before this mystery and pray for Joann’s open courageous heart in faithfully responding to God. Our documents remind us, (#125) “During the Novitiate, the novice is aided in deepening her life of prayer and of loving intimacy with Jesus. It is a time of mutual discernment of the novice’s call in the context of the life and works of the Congregation.”

Like the apostles, Joann is being led up to the mountain with Jesus, in the good company of 5 Federation novices. For while each call is unique, as Sisters of Saint Joseph, we live out this call with our sisters in community.

We trust that Jesus will reveal Himself to Joann in new and ever deepening ways, through prayer and life, through loving intimacy. This is a time of ongoing discernment for Joann, who like Jesus, pondered, “Is this the next step for my life? Am I continuing on the path God wants for me?” These are courageous questions for anyone discerning religious life today.

As I prayed with this passage, my heart was touched by the way that God and Jesus interacted with the apostles, strengthening them and showing them *THE way—the way* to communion. There were three phrases/ words: **be still — listen — gaze.**

We see that the apostles are dazzled by the essence of Jesus in light and glory, standing with Moses and Elijah. Peter excitedly starts to focus on his own plans, “Fellows, I’m going to build a nice tent for each of you.” Then the voice of God outright interrupts Peter while he’s still going on..., “This is My beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased...LISTEN TO HIM.” What a nice way for God to say to Peter, “Feme le bush!” *Be quiet. Be still. Listen. This is not about your plans and your will. Listen to Jesus.* Then Jesus reaches out in love, touching his terrified friends, who by now are prostrate, bidding them to rise and not be afraid. How often Jesus comforts us with these words. We then read, “When the disciples raised their eyes, they saw no one but Jesus (Matt 17:8)” Can you imagine how He looked at each one of them? I wonder how long this gaze lasted. Imagine Jesus looking into Peter’s eyes. Imagine Peter looking back. For a moment, close your eyes and look into the eyes of Jesus. Now see Him tenderly gazing at you. Canadian Philosopher Marshal McLuhan, says, “We become what we behold.”

In her book, “The Sacred Gaze” Susan Pitchford states, “The transfiguration didn’t change Jesus. It just showed the disciples the truth of who he’d been all along-- and that changed them (P.6). I am convinced that gazing into the mirror of Christ will change us too (p.91). No one can look upon God without being transformed, in ways we cannot anticipate, understand, or control.”

Joann, during this sacred time of Novitiate, Jesus invites you to do more of what you already love to do ... to be quiet, to be still, to listen and to gaze at the One who gazes at you and calls you *beloved*. This is music to your heart and will continue to *transform you in ways you cannot even anticipate*.

Susan Pitchford (p.19) further shares, “The gaze at Christ motivates service to others, because if you’re staring into that light, you keep seeing and loving it everywhere you look.” This will lead you to deeper love of God and neighbor, Joann, the essence of our mission of unity, the heartbeat of our Congregation.

Joann, thank you for the opportunity you give to each of us tonight, to renew our gratitude to God for our own vocations. We are reminded to stay attentive to God’s direction in our lives, as “each day, as we make a new beginning in this Little Institute (Constitutions #226).”

Together, let us support and accompany Joann as she goes off to the Novitiate in Rochester, especially with our thoughts and prayers. Let us also support Michelle, as she begins her new ministry in Rochester as Federation Assistant Novice Director. We thank the many sisters who have accompanied Joann, Sister Celeste, the sisters at Our Mother of Consolation and Annunciation House, those in ministry, Sister Dottie and all at the Villa and Sister Marci at Francis House. Many thanks, also, to Sister Eileen Marnien, Councilor for Formation.

May we all **be still, listen, and gaze** at the One who touches us and says, “this is my beloved.” *Ancient words, ever true, changing me and changing you. We have come with open hearts, oh, let the ancient words impart* (Opening hymn: Ancient Words Ronnie C.Jr. freeman/Tony. Wood).

Sister Anne Myers, SSJ