**Celebrating Traditions – Changing the World**

**March 10, 2021**

**6:00 p.m.**

This story is one of many that collectively paint a picture of the early history of religious life in the United States. Sisters recognized the needs of the day and responded without hesitancy or concern for personal cost.

Their courage and tenacity in providing care for all in need are traceable throughout our country’s history. These stories are replicated by women religious throughout the world and are a rich part of the legacy that have shaped the tradition of apostolic religious life.

Traditions consist of the beliefs, customs, and stories that have been handed down from generation to generation. They are the long-established or inherited ways of thinking and acting that provide resources for identity as well as cohesion and continuity in community.

We have heard the words of the poet, Basho; “I do not seek to follow in the footsteps of those of old, rather I seek the things they sought.” Joan Chittister builds on Basho’s words saying “at times we get locked into patterns of behavior because that is the way it has always been, …and any attempt to innovate or change - is seen as a direct affront to a time-honored tradition. From this perspective, we can understand how tradition can prevent change. But tradition is not meant to be a repetition of the past; rather it serves to provide for the continual presence of the spirit which engenders the act, not the act itself. When maintaining the tradition, or the act, becomes more important than maintaining the spirit of the tradition, we simply have obedience to the past, rather than a deep-down commitment to living the spirit of the tradition.”

The history of religious life is replete with stories of commitment and sacrifice as compassionate care was indiscriminately provided during times of great need. Today, our lives continue to be shaped by a singular commitment to make God’s love known in our suffering world. We believe that each life is sacred; that all share in the common good; and that we have a responsibility to ensure a preferential option for those who are poor and marginalized.

Lent is a time of renewal - of self-transformation. As our world emerges from this global health crisis, each of us has a unique opportunity to recommit our lives to these gospel values. May we always seek new ways of mediating God’s love as we strive for a just transformation of our world.