



Together in Hope and Compassion: A Revolution of Tenderness

(SLIDE)

PART I:

Hope Grounded in SOLIDARITY

We have come together here in Mexico City, it seems from a long period of waiting for this event to happen -- strangers to one another on the evening of our first gathering of July 5th, we now go forth as friends – as brothers and sisters. We have come together in a world and church in crisis, chaos, and confrontation with powerful forces unleashed in recent years: a global pandemic, a technological revolution, climate disasters, political divisions of many kinds. Wherever we are in the RJM world, we sometimes find ourselves enduring long periods of darkness. Yet, we continue to confront this darkness, through our service of education in its many and varied ministries. Discovering new ways of living and learning, we offer a flicker of light to those affected by some of the darker global realities. But we have also faced some hard, real questions about what is happening to US -- to our communities, churches, planet. We ask ourselves -- What is God saying and doing? Where indeed is our God, as we wait and watch and work?

We have come here together because we, with Claudine and Pope Francis, are part of a revolution that was begun in Christ crucified.

“We proclaim your death,” we say in the Eucharistic Acclamation. Love seeks communion, so he came, all the way into our deepest darkness, into that terrible cry, “*Why have you forsaken me?*”

And he came out of that cry came the light and the life that the darkness could not overcome:

“*We profess your resurrection.*”

The paschal mystery of Jesus Christ casting fire upon the earth is our entrance to this revolution. It is A Revolution of Hope proclaimed everywhere in the Good News of Jesus, the Gospel.

(SLIDE : IMAGE OF HOPE – TREE -- MARY)

We have been called to witness to that hope as learners and educators, in solidarity, tenderness, and compassion. Our times call for the grace of a Revolution of the Heart, as we seek new paths. At times, we “hope against hope” that God is leading us TOGETHER into a future “beyond anything we can ask for or imagine.” This is the only hope that offers humanity a light stronger than darkness– and offers each of us the gift of revolutionary patience and trust.





With Mary, we are called to say YES to God's future within and among us: "blessed is the One who believed the promises made to her by God." (Luke 1:45) Mary never saw the fulfilment of those promises. Mary: one woman, unknown and poor — truly a model of revolutionary patience...revolutionary hope!

Pope Francis reminds us, building a future of hope begins this way: a seed, a tiny amount of yeast, a single person: "A single individual is enough for hope to exist, and that "single individual" can be you." Soon another YOU, and another YOU, and soon, these YOUS are an "US." And when the "US" begins to act together, it becomes a "WE". Once there is a "WE," a revolution of the heart is under way.

So here we are. . . you, and you, and you, and me. WE make a revolutionary path of hope by walking together. We need companions. We find them in the Gospel, in Claudine and the first sisters, and in one another. If our educational service and institutions are to be transformative, they must be grounded in THIS revolutionary hope.

What does such a revolution look like? How does it come about?

(SLIDE : IMAGE: YOUNG PEOPLE CONNECTED)

Pope Francis reminds us of a first step --- We must restore our CONNECTIONS with our traditions, with each other, especially with those who are NOT like us, and with our neglected and abused Mother Earth. We are invited to look beyond ourselves, go beyond our "comfort zones" in family, community, and education, to join this global revolution, never alone, but TOGETHER: in solidarity, in tenderness, with compassion.

Service to others is above all an act of hope, a hope marked by solidarity, a "matter of love and responsibility handed down" through the generations. How can we learn – and teach – the fundamental message that we are ALL connected? Today's revolution calls for a restoration of healthy relationships. In a world suffering the pains of isolation, fear, and distrust, our service must offer a renewal of the fabric in all our relationships – with persons, other creatures, and the planet -- as a condition for overcoming a "throwaway culture."

When products and the impact of new technologies become more central to our societies than people, we can become like the rich person in the Gospel parable. We can fail to see others as our family, especially those others on the margins – of our lives, our "circles," our national or ecclesial boundaries. When Jesus looked out on the crowds, "he saw his own body."

When I look out upon a crowd of people, what do I see?

How do I feel when I watch the news on tv?





(SLIDE: IMAGE: YOUNG PEOPLE AT BORDER)

Today, it is easier than ever to bring the happenings of the wide world onto a screen the size of a cell phone, but what difference does that make in terms of intimacy? ...belonging? ... care for one another? Have we lost the sense of being intimately related to each other, a community with strong bonds, needs, and feelings for one another? Emotional and cultural indifference can blind us to the most important task before us: the creation of a new humanity that bears the pain of others as its own, in true solidarity, overcoming isolation, displacement, or resentment.

(SLIDES : JESUS AND SAM. WOMAN/JESUS AND ZACCHEUS/ GOOD SAMARITAN)

We have only to call to mind the relationship of Jesus and the Samaritan woman (**SLIDE 6**) to see how Jesus defied norms that promoted cultural segregation. -- OR --we can imagine the surprise of Zaccheus, “the outsider,” “the despised tax collector,” when Jesus looked up at him in the tree and beckoned him to join the group. (**SLIDE**) Who, me? You **want ME** as part of YOUR group? Finally, the story that Jesus told of the Good Samaritan, (**SLIDE**). In a profound and graphic way, it provides a blueprint of how to act when we encounter the pain of foreigner. “The parable shows us how a community can be rebuilt by women and men who identify with the vulnerability of others, who reject the creation of a society based on exclusion, and who are ready to put aside their own plans, and act instead as neighbors, lifting up and rehabilitating the fallen for the sake of the common good” (*Fratelli Tutti*, 67).

At the heart of our service, we are called to promote a culture of connectedness that has as its binding thread, “the value and dignity of every single person in their unique beauty.” This thread weaves its way beyond the familiar and the comfortable to include in the fabric, those on the margins.

With the power flowing from the resurrection of Christ, we become part of a revolution of hope, working together to build a future that includes all persons and other creatures.

SLIDE: THE QUESTIONS BELOW WILL BE TRANSLATED IN 3 LANGUAGES AND PROJECTED. THEY WILL ALSO BE PRINTED AND AT THE PLACES OF THE PARTICIPANTS

20 minutes for reflection and writing:

- *Have I ever felt excluded? What did I feel? How did I act?*
- *Who or what are those -- individuals, groups – that would be part of my “throwaway culture?” (e.g., those individuals or parts of creation that do not matter in my life? whom I do not see, do not want to see?)*
- *What can I do to promote a culture of connectedness?)*





PART II:

A Revolution of Tenderness and Compassion

(SLIDE: IMAGES - LAZARUS/LITTLE GIRL)

Tenderness is one of our Pope's favorite words to describe God, good pastoral care, and the way we are called to love; he writes and speaks of a "revolution of tenderness."

This same Christ who came to cast fire on earth is the one who calls us into his beloved community: "I have not called you servants, but friends" (Jn.15:15). He is the one moved to deepest emotion at the death of his dear friend, Lazarus – the one who joined a crowd of mourners at the bedside of a young girl thought to be dead, took her gently by the hand and said, "Little girl, get up" (Mk.5:41). Throughout his life, and in his death and risen presence, the Lord is a tender, loving friend. He is free from any need to judge or condemn; rather, when he meets another, he extends welcome, goodness, tenderness – and invites each one he meets into new life. "When we feel truly loved, we are led to give that love away to others."

How does this tenderness come about?

I pause to share with you a story that may be familiar: an old legend in the Talmud that recounts a dialogue between a rabbi with Elijah, the prophet.

(SLIDE: WOUNDED HEALER)

Our story tells us that the Messiah is both wounded and yet, ready to serve.

Our revolution must begin with a deepening self-awareness of our own personal struggles, our need for our own tenderhearted understanding and compassionate support – from God and from others. We must acknowledge and own our wounds. Without this we are removed from the lives of others and will serve from a place of power and condescension. The Sufi Poet Rumi teaches us to welcome our weakness as a necessary space for understanding, compassion: "The wound is the place where light enters you."

If we are to be, "leaders" in faith, we must enter the dark and dangerous land of our own weakness and need. Only then may we tell others what we have seen and touched – how we are healed.

This is especially important for the young people that we serve. They need to recognize in their teachers, ministers, pastors, those who have struggled with personal pain and limitations, but who are able to speak words of compassion and offer a message that sounds familiar and real. They will learn best from the witness of a "wounded healer" that they need not run away from their fears, limitations, and insecurities.





Service in this context does not mean having a pre-determined “one size fits all” plan, but meeting each person where they are as a compassionate partner, offering channels through which people may clarify their own experiences, and discover their own personal relationship with God.

Tenderness starts from an experience of wounded or broken heart which reaches our eyes, ears, and hands. Only then we can truly SEE the other, HEAR the other, FEEL their pain as our own. Only then can we LISTEN to the voices of children, the poor, the rich, and those who fear for the future. Yes, we must acknowledge our wounds, gently, ---one at a time. Then armed with this tenderness, our hands and hearts may be at the service of others. Our own brokenness and wounds will become a powerful source of healing.

Jesus is truly risen, but he remains with us bearing the scars of his wounds on his hands, feet, and side. Christ, that Wounded Healer, calls us to follow him in our brokenness, with tender compassion for the other. Tenderness is the path of choice for women and men who are strong, not weak. Tenderness is never weakness.

(SLIDE: IMAGE—CLAUDINE)

As educators following Jesus, Mary, and Claudine, we have a special claim on the service of tenderness. Compassion! -- That gift Claudine received on the road back from her own Calvary where she witness the slaughter of her brothers: “Forgive, Gladly, as we forgive.” **From her wounded, broken heart, like that of Christ on his cross, she received the strength and courage to walk the path of compassion.** It would be a difficult road, a journey into the unknown. What she clearly experienced was the suffering of poor victims of her times, which brought her to tears and trembling – and then to compassionate action, with a tender, mother’s heart. The style of her response to the wounds of her world can be summarized in five words: it was **personal, practical, preventive, preferential, and providential**. It was marked by a tender, compassionate LOVE that was maternal, parental.

“The only power that can give any meaning to the future of our world is the power of merciful love. . .” (Ikon of CT, p 7). As followers of this path, we need to ask ourselves again: how do we bear witness to that love, God’s own **compassion**, in our schools, clinics, feeding stations, workshops. . . in our relationships with students, clients, colleagues, parents. . . with the larger community of nations, with this dear planet we all call home?

I end this second session with words from the poet, Leonard Cohen, “Anthem”

“Ring the bells that still can ring;

Forget your perfect offering.

There is a crack in everything,

That’s how the light gets in.”





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20 minutes for reflection and writing:

- **In this section, what moves me the most?**
- **Am I in touch with my own story of being wounded? Healed or in process?**
- **Have I heard or felt a deeper call for myself? ... for those to whom I am sent?**

PART III:

Go Set the World on Fire

(SLIDE: Fire)

Ignatius often ended his letters to Jesuits going to the missions with the expression *ite, inflammate omnia*—"go, set the world on fire." "Set the world on fire" !!! -- very ambivalent -- even frightening!

What could Ignatius have meant?

Fire destroys! It is a perfect image for a violent revolution. What can the image of fire mean for our "Revolution of Tenderness -- Our revolution of hope and compassion, the revolutionaries being those who put their own wounds at the service of others?"

We find our answer in one of the earliest rules of the Congregation of Jesus and Mary, the rule of 1821.

I quote from the Rule:

The *Sisters of the Sacred Hearts of Jesus and Mary* shall often call to mind these words of Jesus Christ: **"I have come to cast fire on the earth and what do I desire but that it burn?"** They (the sisters) shall endeavor to spread this fire which they have drawn from the Sacred Heart of Jesus Christ, to the hearts of all. (end quote)

We have already said that ours is a revolution of the heart. We have recalled the broken heart of Claudine.

We now understand more deeply that this tenderness is born in the very heart of Jesus, pierced and wounded which reaches from Jesus to the heart of each one. From there to our own eyes, ears, and hands. Then to light the flame of our revolution of tenderness.

Through the darkness of today's conflicts, each and every one of us has received this flame from the heart of Jesus -- no matter how small the flame may be, it will keep burning to overcome that darkness.

We end by recalling words from the beginning of the Gospel of John:





In the beginning* was the Word,
and the Word was with God,
and the Word was God.
He was in the beginning with God.
All things came to be through him,
and without him nothing came to be.
What came to be through him was life,
and this life was the light of the human race;
the light shines in the darkness,
and the darkness has not overcome it.
Let the REVOLUTION begin! Let's GO SET THE WORLD ON FIRE!

[SLIDE 15.](#) Dans Nos Obscurite – Taize (You Tube). Translations at places of participants)

