The Legacy of Janet Erskine Stuart

Call to Prayer – Introduction:

In the name of our God who shares divinity with us,
In the name of our God who shares humanity with us,
In the name of our God who unsettles and inspires,
We prepare our hearts for prayer.

In the Words of Mother Stuart …

Voice 1

We teach by what we are. If we are well penetrated by the thought and ideal which we wish to form in our students, it will come out unconsciously in our work.

All: As Children of the Sacred Heart and in the legacy of Mother Stuart, we commit ourselves to be transformed.

Pause - Silence

Voice 2

Those who have to educate them to something higher must themselves have an idea of what they want, they must believe in the possibility of every mind and character to be lifted to something better that it has already attained; they must believe and care deeply for the things they teach. For no one can be educated by maxim and precept; it is the life lived, and the things loved and the ideals believed in by which we tell, one upon the other.

All: As Children of the Sacred Heart and in the legacy of Mother Stuart, we commit ourselves to dream.

Pause - Silence

Voice 3

And we must remember that each one of the children is destined for a mission in life. Neither we nor they can know now, what it is, but we must know and make them believe that each one has a mission in life and that she or he is bound to find out what it is, that there is some special work for God which will remain undone unless they do it.

All: As Children of the Sacred Heart and in the legacy of Mother Stuart, we commit ourselves to inspire.

Pause – Silence

Voice 4

Our work is eminently a work of faith, in the natural order, the sowing of the seed is the best type. We have to begin by parting with something very precious, the seed and putting it beyond our power, leaving it to the action of sun and frost and rain… Those who have experienced sowing never despair of the harvest, they are not frightened by bad weather… If they have sown good seed it will come up.

All: As Children of the Sacred Heart and in the legacy of Mother Stuart, we commit ourselves to love.

Pause – Silence (longer)

Reflection

Mother Stuart had a passion for education and a deep commitment to spiritual growth, as we hear in her "voices" in our prayer. Letting her words wash over us, we make a commitment to be transformed, to dream, to inspire, and to love by committing ourselves to educating through our "life lived" and by connecting with our God who is love. The natural world had a great impact on the life of Mother Stuart. In nature, she was able to observe transformation, the fulfillment of dreams, inspiration, and love as God cared for it all. And she, herself, felt a part of it. In fact, her conversion to Catholicism was one of many times in which she felt a deep connection to God, who spoke to her through nature. Shirley Miller, RSCJ shared this account in her presentation GOD WRITES STRAIGHT WITH CROOKED LINES: The life and legacy of Janet Erskine Stuart, RSCJ given at Villa Duchesne, 2007:

"As Janet was discerning a call to religious life within the Society, she was going to the chapel for exposition of the Blessed Sacrament. As she was walking through the park, she saw a bed of blue hyacinths. As she looked at them, she said, "The word of God came to me." And she realized that God was calling her to religious life. Not quite believing this, she asked for a sign by which she might know this was a true call. She asked that in the chapel of the convent, contrary to all likelihood, she would be allowed to kneel on one of the prie dieu placed before the altar, where only the religious knelt. She entered the chapel and had scarcely taken her place in a pew when one of the religious asked her to replace her because she felt too ill to continue to remain there. She knew at that moment that her future had been opened out before her.

Her life was often like that – God speaking to her through the beauty of nature or through unexpected experiences, generally, in very simple moments and events. Our reality is the text through which God speaks to us."

Meditation

Praying with nature as a window into the divine presence deeply reminds us of our identity as part of nature. It, therefore, can draw us even more fully into communion with God, for when we are connected with our deepest selves, we are freed to connect ever more intimately with God. Simultaneously, when we connect intimately with the Creator of the entire universe, we are freed to grow more and more into our deepest, most real selves.

Following the example of Mother Stuart, allow yourself to behold a natural scene right now…Observe, notice the gifts of nature, notice where you might see God. At this particular time of year, we're going to see the world in a state of flux…notice how it looks and how it <u>reflects</u> you right now. How is nature <u>speaking</u> to you?

Pause – Silence (longer)

Closing Prayer

Hidden God, whose wisdom compels our love,
and unsettles all our values;
fill us with desire to search for your truth
that we may transform the world. + Amen. +

Spirit Seeking - Words by Janet Erskine Stuart; ad. David Cinquegrani

Spirit seeking light and beauty, Heart still longing for your rest,
In your search for understanding, Only thus can you be blest.
Through the vastness of creation,
Though your restless thought may roam,
God is all that you can long for, God is all creation's home.

Taste and see God, feel and hear God,
Hope and grasp the unseen hand;
Though the darkness seem to hide you, Faith and love can understand.
Loving Wisdom, guiding Spirit, All our hearts are made anew.
Lead us through the land of shadows 'Til we come to rest in you.