

How can this be?

Feast of Blessed Theresa Gerhardinger, SSND

May 9, 2023

Call to Prayer:

The year 2023 brings the 190th anniversary of Mother Theresa founding the School Sisters of Notre Dame. If she were with us, she might echo Mary's question to the angel: '*How can this be?*' How can this be that a religious community begun with three women in Neunburg vorm Wald, Bavaria would still be active ministering internationally with almost 2,000 living Sisters and 20,000 Sisters in the communion of saints? Mother Theresa experienced many "How can this be?" moments in founding the community and throughout her lifetime. Like our Blessed Mother, Mother Theresa answered each moment confidently knowing of the enduring love of God. As we celebrate Mother Theresa today, we give thanks for her example and reflect on the many "How can this be?" moments in our own lives.

Opening Reflection:

How have I answered the various "How can this be?" events in my life? Where do I turn for strength and guidance during these challenging times?

Song: [Because We Love God](#) – Kathy Sherman, CSJ

Reading:

[\(Excerpt from Pope Francis 2023 Easter Vigil Homily\)](#)

This, then, is what the Pasch of the Lord accomplishes: it motivates us to move forward, to leave behind our sense of defeat, to roll away the stone of the tombs in which we often imprison our hope, and to look with confidence to the future, for Christ is risen and has changed the direction of history. Yet, to do this, the Pasch of the Lord takes us back to the grace of our own past; it brings us back to Galilee, where our love story with Jesus began, where the first call took place. In other words, it asks us to relive that moment, that situation, that experience in which we met the Lord, experienced his love and received a radiantly new way of seeing ourselves, the world around us and the mystery of life itself. Brothers and sisters, to rise again, to start anew, to take up the journey, we always need to return to Galilee, that is, to go back, not to an abstract or ideal Jesus, but to the living, concrete and palpable memory of our first encounter with him. Yes, to go forward we need to go back, to remember; to have hope, we need to revive our memory. This is what we are asked to do: to remember and go forward! If you recover that first love, the wonder and joy of your encounter with God, you will keep advancing. So, remember, and keep moving forward.



Julia Stankova – Annunciation, 2009

Prayers for the Community:

Prayer Leader: How can this be that at the age of twelve, Caroline Gerhardinger would be asked to train as a teacher and give up her dream of traveling the Danube with her father?

ALL: “True happiness is happiness in God. Nothing suffices to fill the heart but God.” (2)

Prayer Leader: How can this be that early in the life of this new religious community its visionary, Bishop Michael Wittman, and protector, Fr. Francis Sebastian Job, would both pass away?

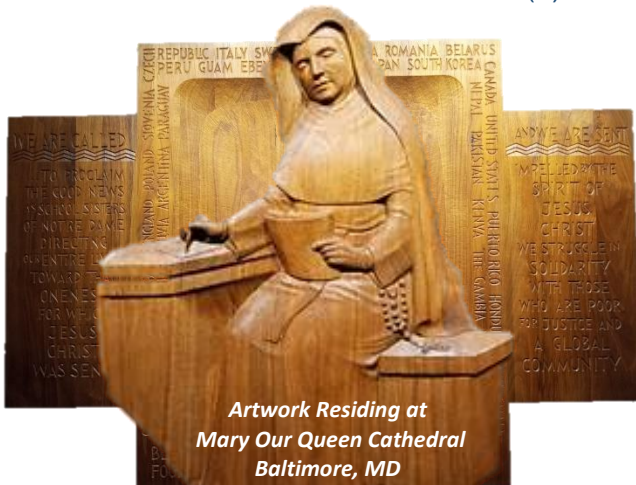
ALL: O God, I desire to serve You with constant joy and total trust because You are my joy and help.” (2)

Prayer Leader: How can this be that the young SSND community is called to minister in America and in so doing would be teaching not only girls but boys, a practice against its founding mission?

ALL: “Surely, beginnings everywhere are more or less difficult.” (2091)

Prayer Leader: In our current times, how can this be that children and teachers are hurt or killed just for going to school?

ALL: “Love is victorious over all evil.” (1)



Prayer Leader: How can this be that our Earth would be suffering from damage caused by human actions?

ALL: “We must all responsibly cherish God’s work.” (5025)

Prayer Leader: How can this be that we struggle to recognize the inherent dignity of our indigenous and immigrant brothers and sisters?

ALL: “True and sincere love of our neighbor is at the same time the infallible criterion of our love of God.” (4307)

Prayer Leader: You are invited to add your own intentions. Our response will be:

“What the future will bring is in God’s hands.” (5226)

(Contemplative Pause)

Closing Prayer:

Loving and reassuring God, we thank You for being with us in our ‘wondering’ how the things we experience today – the troubling and the good – come to be. May we follow the model of Mother Theresa ‘to take refuge under the protection of our most powerful and gracious Blessed Mother, Mary. Then you shall, like the tree near running waters, bring forth fruit, plentiful fruit..., to your salvation, God’s delight, and the consolation of the whole order.’ (Letter 4528, adapted). We ask for the grace and strength to act for the dignity of life and the care of all creation and to open the eyes of our hearts to see Your Spirit moving among us, strengthening us in our human weakness and to know that with You, all things are possible, both in our province and in our world. Amen!

The **Department of Ministry Services** gratefully acknowledges Sister Joan Pikiell, SSND for her support in developing this year’s feast day prayer.

Designed by: Laura Stafford