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An open letter to the princes of the church

Jocelyn A. Sideco | Feb. 22, 2013 Young Voices

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Dear princes of the church,

I do hope this letter finds you well. As for me, I am still a bit startled about the news of Pope Benedict's resignation. I find my heart racing as I imagine all the change and newness our church is about to undergo.

I am grateful for his ministry and for his example. Although I am not sure what to make of his decision and how this will impact future pontifical reigns, I can appreciate his human struggle between humility and pride as he steps down from the limelight and desires a more private life.

He offered his announcement on the Feast of Our Lady of Lourdes, and many people say there was no significance. I beg to differ. As a young woman encountered the truth of the miraculous sighting of the Blessed Virgin Mary in a desolate grotto in France, she reintroduced the world to Mary and her way of peace, healing and truth.

You, too, have this opportunity nearly 155 years after the Immaculate Conception appeared to St. Bernadette. The burdens of this life continue to weigh down the spirits of the faithful, and we need you all to endure more peace so as to promote healing and truth.

Be innovative and trust in the Creator God: Listen for alternatives and new possibilities

Uncover truths about God and truths about the human condition that promote goodness and life in its abundance. People are desperate for guidance. Do not get stuck in your ways, but be free in God's ways that remain a mystery to you. This negotiation is not political; it is prayerful. May your prayer, in silence and in community, soften your heart to God's invitation of unity. Practice gazing at yourself and the church the way God does, calling all people to be holy. Allow God's will to shape your consciences, and trust that you cannot know everything.

Promote peace and trust in the God who is in relationship with us: Be diligent in your shared ministry

Do not forget the other men and women who share in your own call and participation in God's kin-dom. Work together with respect and humility, not arrogance and loathing. Be examples of partnerships that the flock can emulate and take pride in. Demonstrate graciousness to others and value differences by strengthening in patience.

Serve God in the least of these: Comfort the poor and offer them the dignity of being first among equals

Ask daily, "How am I called to restore dignity today?" Focus not on your own concerns of daily needs, but on the needs of those that society tends to forget and be disgusted by. Give generously to those on the margins, spend time in their communities, and work toward elevating their profile as children of God. If you, yourself,

cannot do this, encourage the ones who can and make straight their paths.

Be transfigured: Hold on to hope

Stand in awe of the law and of the prophets; be inspired and be the man, the leader, the holy son of God that the world so desperately needs today. Let your relationship with Christ guide you to inspiration and to life down from the mountaintop into people's homes and everyday lives. Offer the healing and redemption to people personally.

Practice the resurrection: This requires God

You cannot control life. You participate in life. May your participation and contribution be always a contribution toward God's will. When you grow weary, lean on the strength of your persevering people and your good God. When you grow doubtful, find the courage of Thomas to touch and believe. When you grow cocky in your own accomplishments, remember that your call is to be of service in the never-ending realization of justice and mercy.

And above all, continue to love. Show love to the stranger. Show love to your brother. Show love to your sister. Show love to those who oppose you. Show love onto yourself just as God does.

With much peace and hope,

Jocelyn A. Sideco

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