

Peggy McDonnell

Dear Carol,

I am late with this response to your email of December 15th 2016. Hopefully these few thoughts are not too late to be folded in to the whole and will add something to the thinking on this topic.

I have been trying to figure out why this and why now. But, not being able to figure that out I began to go over my thinking on Philippine and her gift in my life. In fact I learned just yesterday of another order that is doing the same thing-naming their region(s) so I am gathering there is a wider picture here which I do not have a sense of.

I've spent a fair amount of time "in" Cathy Mooney's book on Philippine, especially pages 206-209. Those pages nourished me as I was forming and running The Center for Ethics, the NFP that I set up under the umbrella of the Society. (1995-2014) The chapter on leadership is where I found my dwelling. I loved it and still do. I journaled in the margins and at the end of Cathy's chapter on leadership and have kept my jottings as they are.

I have never erased anything. I wrote "I must live at the depth of my being, to be a voice for the voiceless. I am certain God calls me to holiness through totally gluing myself to my deepest convictions- or discernment."

I seem to have used "gluing myself to my deepest convictions" and "discernment" in the same way though if I rewrote or respoke them today I would say that discernment is essential to knowing my deepest convictions and standing by them.

I add in my jottings that this is otherwise known as "living at the level of the heart" as the author (Michael Downey) explains it in A Blessed Weakness. This book was written about those with Downs Syndrome, and the L'Arche movement. So, in my jottings in Cathy Mooney's book I am seeing "the poor" as those with physical weaknesses..... Not necessarily those in economic poverty. Michael says that "the weakest live at the level of the heart."

I wanted to live at the level of the heart as the sick taught me. That was and still is my deepest desire. I really spent my life among the sick as one with many physical problems over those years. The sick with whom I worked knew this. I lived and worked among them. The last part of my ministry- at The Center, was actually in a more upscale community, but it made no difference that many were not economically poor. Those with whom I worked were very weak through illness of all kinds.

If I am awarded the Laetare Medal from Notre Dame, I would imagine that this is one part of my work that they are honoring.

I was so struck in Spring 2016 when I went to the healthcare task force meeting in St Louis. For the most part the women around the table were nurses. What a privilege it was to be with them! In what I write here I think we would all say Amen, though we might use different words.

With deep gratitude for allowing my voice to be heard. And I hope I am not too late.

Peggy McDonnell, RSCJ