

FROM THE DESK OF MARY SHARON . . .

Be mercy poured out for the world

by Mary Sharon Moore

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I keep coming across the following story, and find that it evokes the vocational challenge in an unsettling way. Here's the story . . .

The young disciple seeks counsel—let's say vocational counsel—from Abbot Joseph. “I keep my little rule as best I can, my fasting and prayer and meditation and holy silence. I cleanse my heart of wayward thoughts. What more should I do?”

This sounds a lot like the rich young man who seeks counsel—let's say vocational counsel—from Jesus. And Jesus gently but clearly tells the rich young man, “Go, sell what you have, and give the money to the poor. Then come, follow me.” Likewise, Abbot Joseph, the story goes, rises up and stretches out his hands toward heaven, and his fingertips become like little burning lamps. “Why not be changed totally into fire?”

Why not, indeed! Did you think you were anointed in the Holy Spirit just to settle for your small vision for your life? I ask myself this question often. Why not be changed totally into fire? Why not become all flame? And how do you do that, anyway?

That's the vocational challenge unique to each of us. Whatever you do, leave a pint of

blood, I heard someone say. Pour yourself out like a libation, St. Paul would say. Be like God; be like Christ Jesus. Be mercy poured out for the world.

And how do you do that? I can't answer that question for you, I can't even coherently answer that question for myself, but to be like God, to be like Christ Jesus, to be mercy poured out for the world, to become all flame, means to yield to the movement of the Holy Spirit in all circumstances. I'm not speaking here of emoting your way through life, but living gently enough, mindfully enough, to be aware of the still small stirring of the Holy Spirit, and then boldly acting on it.

Notice the stirring of quiet satisfaction in work well done or in an act of kindness or mercy gracefully extended. Notice the tug to act justly in a particular situation; to take initiative. Notice those perfect opportunities to be light, salt, grace, or peace in your world. Give the Holy Spirit the freedom to be the true active agent in your life. Notice, notice, notice, and then act. Pray without ceasing, as St. Paul says; in all things, rejoice.

MARY SHARON MOORE, M.T.S., is founding director of **AWAKENING VOCATIONS**, author of *Touching the Reign of God* (Wipf and Stock, 2009), and creator of the L.A.S.T. Workshop for workteam development. Her work in vocation discernment spans from Church ministry to animating organizations for work that touches the soul of the world. For more, visit www.awakeningvocations.com.

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