

Good afternoon dear friends,

This special moment of coming together today in prayerful celebration reflects both the culmination and the initiation of steps taken in faith and courage. It is a historic moment. It is a milestone.

It can be said as well, that what we are realizing here today, the affirmation of a new shared leadership model, a new approach to community building also connects us to the wider life and witness of religious communities across the globe where the catholic sisterhood is uniting and building collaborations on a scale never seen before.

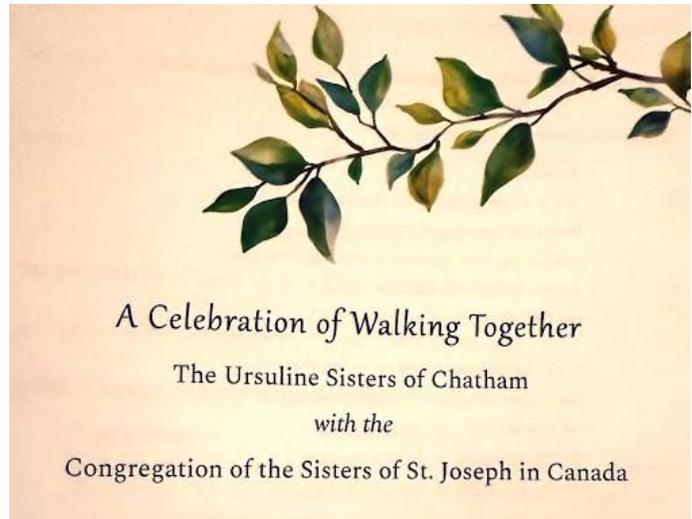
We know that we are in good company and deep solidarity with so many religious women who desire to live their mission fully and so are embracing the urging of the Spirit to grow and evolve according to the presenting circumstances.

Living a life of service, of active consecration in the world has always required showing up, stretching.. shifting...Today is no different and yet today is one more example of what has made our missions fruitful--- the practice of letting go so that the Spirit can lead us into newness.

Reflecting on the months and years of planning which brought us to this moment...some encouragement from the spiritual legacy of Pope Francis, who made it a priority to support contemporary religious life comes to mind.

Francis urged all religious ...all people of good faith...

“Look into the depths of your heart, look into your own inner depths and ask yourself: do you have a heart that desires something great, or a heart that has been lulled to sleep by things? Has your heart preserved the restlessness of seeking or have you let it be suffocated by things that end by hardening it? God awaits you, seeks you; how do you respond to? Are you aware of the situation of your soul? Or have you nodded off? Do you believe God is waiting for you or does this truth consist only of “words”?”



Pope Francis often spoke about restlessness---in the positive.. a healthy virtue in fact...which we need to preserve and cultivate. It can be very hard, awkward uncomfortable to be with an experience of restlessness....yet when we listen actively .. to “divine discontent” or the persistent, God-inspired longing for something more ... we can discover the Spirit’s wisdom and a deeper connection with God and our gospel mission.

Restlessness fires ongoing growth and transformation and today we celebrate the Holy restlessness which prompted the searching, conversations and discovery of a new way forward in life and mission between communities who have long been friends. The coming together of the Ursuline and St Joseph sisters is a response to a longing for something more. It is an action taken in faith, a call of the Spirit to enhance the lives of both groups for the common mission of the Gospel.

As we move forward today, we know like the travellers walking on the road to Emmaus, doubts, questions, uncertainty will surely arise as we encounter the unexpected in our call to walk together in the footsteps of the Risen One.

Like the gospel travellers, we will need to pay attention to the strangers in our midst who reveal Christ, who share the good news with us and inspire us to do the same.

Today...like the travellers who despite themselves came to recognize Christ by their side—.. we can pray:

Stay with us, Lord.

Stay with us ... and give us the grace of a holy restlessness, which moves us to bring the Gospel to others... Grant us a deep longing to know you better, and fill us with the HOPE which comes from having known you, loved you and chosen your way. Amen.

(Noreen Allossery-Walsh, osu)