TRIUMPH OF THE CROSS
Presented by Sr. Moira Quinn, OSsR
Mass of the Feast and Occasion of OSsR Associate Commitment Renewal

Welcome to the Monastery of the Incarnation. I think we can all agree it has been some year, so we are pleased to be able to gather here today for your renewal of commitment as Redemptoristine Associates.

I believe the Associate program began over 25 years ago with Sr. Mary Regina in the big parlor of the old monastery. Through the years Sisters Paula, Lydia, Paz, Hilda and Mary have contributed to the sharing of our charism with the women who graced our doors as the program evolved. Over the years, together we have shared prayer, insight, family concerns and wisdom in an atmosphere of trust and mutual support.

The Associates wish to live fully the Gospel of Christ in every aspect of their lives. Christ is the light of their faith, the strength of their charity, and the source of their hope. The ideal is to make all Christ's attitudes and choices truly their own. The more they progress in this transformation of themselves in the Redeemer, the more they will be able to be a living witness, a living memory of the Paschal Mystery of Redemption which the Father has accomplished in God's plan of Love for our sisters and brothers in the church and in the world. See Const. 1

Today's feast commemorates the Exaltation of the Cross. For the purpose of my talk this morning, I will use the old name of this feast, the Triumph of the Cross.

We Redemptoristines celebrate this day particularly because on this day in 1755 our foundress, Ven. Maria Celeste's soul, in St. Gerard's words, "…winged its flight to heaven like a dove, to receive the reward she has merited through her great love for Jesus."

Celeste triumphed over all the crosses in her life and is now filled with heavenly joy and peace. And we present day Redemptoristines feel we have some sense of triumph over the crosses of the last two and a half years. How is that possible? Listen to what Jesus once said to Celeste from the 'Throne of the Cross,' "…your humanity will be always on the cross and will always be in the joy and peace of My Divine Spirit."

It certainly was that way for us. This year, our community experienced a heavy cross when we were given a deadline of when we had to be out of our temporary housing at Cabrini and the clock was rapidly ticking down to the final date and we had exhausted all avenues of search for a new monastery. Then, out of the blue, a miracle happened. The Carmelites invited us to share this beautiful, peaceful

monastery with them. It was a miracle, a solution, which benefits both our communities.

Julian of Norwich, the 14th century mystic affirmed this in her writings. She wrote that God **manifests** God's self when we are at our lowest and all options are exhausted. She remarked, "It has **ever** been so before the **coming of miracles."**

It is like the AA saying you have to hit rock bottom before you realize your Higher Power is in control and you can't do it by yourself. Only when you turn it over a glorious new life begins. We turned it over completely to God and a miracle happened.

Often, when weighed down by the various crosses in life we ask where God is in all this. When we hit bottom and **lift** our eyes to THE CROSS we see our crosses are not the end but keys to new life here and the eternal life to come. Through prayer and humble acceptance we turn those keys and find the grace, strength and courage to enter into the peace and joy of the Divine Spirit present in the here and now.

When you think about it, the cross is an odd symbol: it depicts humiliation, pain, torture, death. But we followers of Christ the Redeemer see in it **through faith** hope, mercy, strength, salvation, light, Love with a capital L; and in knowing that **Love** we experience peace and joy.

St. Paul said, "God forbid that I should glory, save in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ." Therefore, the cross should be our boast and glory. I don't know about you but, sometimes, I could do with a few less crosses. Sadly, many are of my own making. I think St Alphonsus, who was known for his scrupulosity, would concur with St Philip Neri who said, "Generally, we are **carpenters** of our own crosses." What saved Alphonsus was that he was convinced and believed, despite his feeling of unworthiness, "that God so loved the world that he gave his only Son" and that Jesus died for love of him on the glorious cross.

Crosses of our own making can be transformed into keys of salvation with redemptive value when we unite ourselves to the cross. The Associates' Constitutions affirms this where it says, "Love of the cross is essentially love and imitation of Jesus Christ. Jesus has freed the world by embracing our painful death so as to **transform it** into His redemptive death…to the supreme glory of the resurrection." OSsR Constitution and Statutes 29

The key to this celebration of this feast of the Triumph, or Exaltation of the Cross is recognizing the **plentiful redemption** of Christ in our lives and all the graces it acquires and invites us as Redemptoristines and Associates, to share that Love, with a capital L, with the entire world.

Recently, I have gotten into "Zentangles": a meditative art form. Very simple, easy to do, no real skill in drawing required. All you need is a Sharpie, a small square of paper and an open mind. Some call it doodling, some call it prayer. What it is, is very focusing, relaxing, and contemplative. On the cover of your mass booklet is an example.

What you do is sit down and draw various patterns or repetitions with no forethought or goal of desired outcome. It is only when it is finished and you sit with it for a while a message may be revealed.

After this one was complete I named it *Plentiful Redemption.* You see, the cross isn't hard and impenetrable but rather porous and giving. Little tendrils tethered to the cross drift out with their own little crosses attached to the ends. These are **our** connections with Christ, as in, "I am the Vine, you are the branches, those who abide in me and I in them bear much fruit, because apart from me you can do nothing." John 15:5

Before I said the cross was giving; see the little circles all around, inside the cross and floating out of the cross? These are the bubbles of grace, plentiful redemption, surrounding us at every given moment of our lives. All those tiny bubbles of grace adds a lightness to the crosses in our lives knowing we are Loved, redeemed, tethered to the one true cross of Christ.

That is why we celebrate today: we glory in the cross of our Redeemer who **Loves** us beyond our imagining and we exult Christ for the plentiful redemption wrought by his passion on the cross and his glorious resurrection. Loved and redeemed, filled with peace and joy, we triumph in the Holy Cross. September 14, 2013