

Spes Gaudentes

"Our joy is in hope"

A Newsletter from the Daughters of Divine Hope

Blessings in these 12 Days of Christmas! There is a wondrous time that occurs every year beginning with the celebration of the birth of our Savior Jesus on Christmas Day and ending with the arrival of the magi on the Feast of the Epiphany. These twelve days of Christmas span the end of one year and the beginning of the new. We make this transition in the midst of a holy season, a time of great grace and full of hope. The Savior's coming invoke in us a desire to review the past year with hope in his mercy and thanksgiving for his generous providence, and to look to the future resolved to become more Christ-like and hopeful in his promise of everlasting life.

My reflection on what has passed begins with humble thanks to the Lord whose love has brought us to this day. In his providence, you have been a part of an amazing journey of faith by your friendship, prayers, support, encouragement, and care. While this year has been one focused on my novitiate formation and transformation in the love of Christ, it has also been a year of laying the foundation for the Daughters of Divine Hope; and, because of your gracious generosity, you have been an integral part of the process.

We began 2011 by consecrating the year to the Blessed Trinity and then celebrating our first Mass in the convent chapel on January 5th, the feast day of St. John Neumann, patron of the Daughters of Divine Hope. Thus the tradition of celebrating the patrons' feasts was initiated. Throughout the year we had the joy of celebrating Mass in this beautiful chapel and praying the liturgy of the hours as part of the contemplative life of this infant community. Hours of prayer soon established the daily rhythm of my life and anchored each day in the Lord.



Entrance to St. Joseph Convent located in Marshall, Texas; home of the Daughters of Divine Hope.

This time of formation included retreats with different religious communities where prayerful solitude was combined with the opportunity to learn from other consecrated men and women. Traveling to Clear Creek Abbey and to Mepkin Abbey, wearing the religious habit, was an amazing testament to the working of the Holy Spirit through this simple sign of consecration to Jesus Christ. Strangers easily approached me to tell their stories, to seek solace and to ask for prayers or guidance.

Many hours of study filled the days as I lived the novitiate plan under Bishop Corrada's direction. Around the hours of prayer were set the hours of study and the daily work of establishing a new religious community. A plan for the formation of women who would join us and the Rule for the community were created and approved by the bishop. Slowly and purposefully, with the Lord's grace, the Daughters of Divine Hope took shape.

Throughout the year women who are drawn to religious life came to visit, to pray and to discern if the Daughters of Divine Hope is where they are being led. These were days of great joy, seeing how the Lord was working in their lives and to share with them the work he has entrusted to our care.

The novice year of grace culminated with the profession of public vows of poverty, chastity, obedience and fidelity on November 20, the Solemnity of Christ the King. This solemn moment in time, when I committed myself to Christ and to the service of his Church, and where the Church officially received my vows, was significant for the establishment of the nascent religious community of the Daughters of Divine Hope. Our Lord, in his most wondrous and generous love, working in the life of one woman and through the ordained ministers in his holy Church, has brought about a new religious community as a witness of his saving hope. It has been a most humbling experience for me.

Sr. Susan Catherine Kennedy signing her vows after the public profession. Fr. Gavin Vaverek, Chaplain of the Daughters of Divine Hope, receiving her vows on behalf of the Church and signing as witness.



Dedicated to fulfilling his holy will and trusting in his divine providence, we turn our gaze to the future. The Daughters of Divine Hope is now ready to accept women who are called to this life of contemplative prayer and active apostolate. Women from seven states have indicated a desire to join the Daughters of Divine Hope and are currently in discernment. We are established in the Catholic Church as a Public Association of the Faithful, have gained the Internal Revenue Service recognition as a religious organization and are incorporated in the State of Texas, thus we have the solid legal standing within the Church and with the federal and state governments. We have laid the foundation and are ready to build this new religious community; discerning the Father's will for the Daughters of Divine Hope, following the guidance of the Holy Spirit, and trusting in the Lord's Divine Providence. "Divine hope sustains us in life and projects us into the future. Hope is the virtue where the promise of life eternal washes away despair, anxiety, fear, and uncertainty. Hope beckons us to joyful service in the kingdom of God." (Rom 5:1-5)

This is an exciting time for the Daughters of Divine Hope and for the Church in East Texas. I hope you will continue to be a part of this journey of faith with your prayers, support and participation. There are many ways that you can help this fledgling community grow: prayers and encouragement, financial support, food items, general business and household supplies (like copy paper, postage, cleaning supplies, paper goods, etc.) and being available when help is needed. If you like to work with your hands, we could use volunteers to help us maintain the convent – painting, building shelves, making rooms ready for the women to come, creating flower gardens, etc. We could also use volunteer help when we host retreats and other activities.

I look forward to hearing from you, including your requests for prayers, your questions, your inquiries for more information and your suggestions. May our gracious and generous Lord bless you with grace in abundance this coming year that, through His saving hope, you may be filled with deep joy and abiding peace. I pray this through Christ our Lord. Amen.

Sr. Susan Catherine Kennedy

Daughters of Divine Hope

Year of Grace 2011

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"We know that in everything God works for good with those who love him, who are called according to his purpose." (Rom. 8:28)