

Reflection for the Closing Liturgy for St. Elizabeth Academy
Sunday, July 21, 2013
Sr. Fran Raia, C.P.P.S.

Welcome and what a wonderful sight to see the faces of so many in this chapel, the choir loft and in the cafeteria! (About 600 attended)

Several years ago we as Sisters of the Most Precious Blood identified four values that came out of our experience of who we were and values we wanted to emphasize in our ministries and institutions. The values are: **Hospitality, Presence (being present), Reconciliation, and Response to Human Needs.** Behind me in front of the altar are four posters that the students made to show each value. **Hospitality** has two hands above a group of people; **Reconciliation** has hands touching with the peace dove above; **Presence** is pictured with fingers interlocking; **Response to Human Needs** has hands reaching out to care for others. Perhaps these values were not named this way for you when you were in school but surely with the example of St. Elizabeth giving bread to the poor you were encouraged to do things for others, perhaps joining the Mission Club. That is response to human needs. These values were implicit in the family spirit so demonstrated at SEA.

When we heard the story of the first reading about Abraham welcoming the strangers and offering shelter, food, bread to them; we see for how many centuries hospitality was a strong value in the Jewish tradition. As Christians, that is also our tradition and continues in many families today.

In the Gospel, Mary and Martha of Bethany welcome Jesus and his disciples and attend to their needs. Those of us gathered here today have been living this family spirit that you experienced at SEA and brought it into your own lives.

Think of the times when you were a student here and needed someone to listen to you, needed to talk over a problem or get help with an assignment. Teachers, staff, cooks, cleaners were here to be present to you as we see Mary and Martha being attentive to Jesus, listening to him. All of you have also been in the presence of all the great women pictured in the stain glass windows of the chapel. We see St. Cecilia, Judith and Esther from the Old Testament, St. Elizabeth and Mary, Mother of Jesus. These women have hovered over you just as the faculty, staff, etc., have encouraged, challenged, sheltered and loved you. They gave their lives for others just as Jesus did, the Lamb of God, to reconcile the world to God. The cover over the altar in chapel has the Lamb at the top.

So, the four values: Hospitality, Reconciliation, Presence, Response to Human Needs—have always been lived here at SEA, have been implicit in the lives of you graduates and will continue as you reach out to welcome the stranger; as you listen to a friend, listen to God in prayer; as you respond to a need; as you forgive a hurt.

As Dr. Seuss says: ***“Don’t cry because it’s over. Smile because it happened.”***

The spirit of SEA is not over---the spirit continues in YOU! Will you commit to carrying on the spirit?
Answer: **I WILL!**