

**Celebrating Barbara Croghan SL
and Donna Mattingly SL
Loretto Motherhouse
April 25, 2010**

It's a gorgeous morning, fit to celebrate the goodness of God, the Holy One who shepherds us, gathers us here. Out of all the people in the world, God's mysterious beckoning has called Barbara and Donna into this particular Loretto fold. Some intuition, some deep sense of knowing and being known has, over the years, drawn them here, to this moment. And every one of us as well has been drawn, each in her or his own way, each on our own path by that same mysterious beckoning, in such a way that our paths converge here today. It's mysterious and amazing that we are here together.

The gospel gives us the beautiful image of Christ, with and in his Abba, holding us in his (and God's) hand, and Jesus promises "no one can take us out of his hand." Whatever happens, whatever lies behind or ahead of us, it is all a part of this mysterious call. At the heart of it all, we believe, lies a great gift of Love, which must evoke from us a great trust. We are invited to willingly put our lives into God's hands, to find comfort and rest and security in being held. Love first, trust is the partner: that is the dance.

But how, really, do we give our lives to God? **How** do we trust God?

Imagine the great, all-encompassing hand of God holding in being this whole universe, including this teeny-tiny planet Earth. God's hand, keeping Earth afloat among the billion other galaxies in the darkness of outer space. And here on Earth, the miracle of life, beginning, developing, everything connecting and contributing its life to the life of everything else. A great love, an intense desire to share life draws things together to create new life. An amazingly beautiful and fragile and generous Earth which feeds and nourishes us – all of it held in the hand of God. Every breath we take, every bit of air we breathe, food we eat, water we drink, everything gives its life for us – all of it arising from within the creating hand of God. Every relationship, from our ancestry, our birth, our life-companions, even those who hurt us: all that has gone before is making the fabric of our lives right now.

We cannot escape trusting Earth to feed and nourish us; we have to trust each other to survive in life. In truth, we all depend upon everything, and everything depends upon that loving creativity of God's hand holding it in being. Everything is at every moment GIFT. But maybe we don't make the connection: when we relate to our Earth with trust and love and care, when we trust and love and care for one another, that **is not separate** from our response of love and gratitude to the great Giver of all Gifts, our God, who is the Source of it all. God has told us in Christ: "I am with you," — not up in the sky, but here, surrounding us. In poet Mary Oliver's words, "...never hurry through the world / but walk slowly and bow often." God is present in our midst. "All, all is gift. Give it away. Give it away." (Daniel Berrigan)

And today, it is your act of trust and love that brings us here to celebrate you, Barbara and Donna. Your lives are at different stages (omega and alpha, as you say), and what lies ahead for each of you will differ. But your hearts must be in the same place: a place of willingness to make of your lives a gift in response to

the great Gift we have been given, to share your lives in self-giving love. We in the Loretto community join you, offering you our love and support as you place your lives in God's hands in full trust, pledging with us to work together "to create a more just and peaceful world" (*IATW* 40), to "bring the healing Spirit of God into our world" (33), to "be a power of reconciliation."(23)

Today we join in communion, receiving as our food the Bread of Life, trusting that Christ can and will rise with the energy of new life in our each of our hearts and in our community. We place your lives and ours trustingly in God's hands, and pray that we may, together, "sing with our lives the glory of God."

Elaine Prevallet SL