Voices of Sisters
Spirituality




(Unsplash/Jon Tyson)



by Sr. Joan Sauro

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Sister Charla sits against the left wall of the sanctuary of our magnificent motherhouse chapel. This evening she presides over the prayer service for Sister Rose Regina, a woman beloved, as witnessed by the stream of relatives and friends called to the podium. They express their grief, but also their great and tender love.

I am to sing "The Rose" in honor of Rose, my dear friend.  I am no practiced singer, unsure what music, if any, will come out of my mouth. If need be, I will read the words. I am to be last. I wait for the presider.

Finally, she looks at me. And nods.

I rise, make my way up the steps to the podium, and say a few words of tribute. Then I nod to the pianist on the other side of the chapel. She gives me a single note and nods back.

And music like I never heard before or since comes out of my mouth.

*Some say love it is a river that drowns the tender reed.*

*I say love it is a flower, and you, Rose, its only seed.*

First, silence. Then applause, tears and embracing.

*Breathtaking. Incredibly beautiful. I am awestruck.*

Months later, I myself am awestruck, still. I think of those nods that opened the floodgates. *Yes, yes, yes.*

And I think of all the nods we give in a day, just a simple bowing of the head. *Yes*.



St. Joseph Sr. Rose Regina Smith (Joan Sauro)

*Yes* to those who live gracefully and go peacefully into the sunset. *Yes* to those who *rage against the dying of the light.*

*Yes* to the rumpled gay man who bags our groceries. *Yes*, and a little bow.

Nods to the stormy day. *Yes* to the man who plows our driveway — snow heaps on either side like a veritable Alps. On his way out, he waves and wishes us a "green day."

*Yes* to my eighth grade classmate who sends me a card out of the blue on one of those green days. *Yes* to the past and yes to the future. A nod to our community leaders who wonder what our next move should be.

*Yes* to the big clumsy crows that brave the winter. *Yes* to the one who swings on the electric wire outside my window. *Yes* to the carrots I left deep in the frozen garden. They stir, rambunctious.

*Yes* to the one who rises early to hang bags of pastries on people's back doors. *Yes* to the one who journeys to the southern border to serve soup and embrace orphaned children. *Yes* to all those fleeing for their lives. Nods to those who fight for them in court.

*Yes* to my fifth grade teacher approaching the veil between this life and the next. *Yes* to my friend who dances barefoot in our province chapel. She smiles all the while, as does my fifth grade teacher, up in her third floor bedroom. She turns her head to the dance on her TV. Her fingers keep slow tap on the bed. *Yes* to all those who smile and nod their way out of this world.

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Which is not to say that all nods come easily. Sometimes there are serious questions when the voice comes from out of this world. Consider the Annunciation. "How can this be?" Mary asks the angel. She receives that answer all of us long for. "Be not afraid. The Holy Spirit will come upon you."

What a *Yes* is hers. The Divine becomes human and dwells among us.  What can she do but sing, the exultant Magnificat.

Her song continues today with Sisters Sing, 20 women of a certain age singing, "Hallelujah,You Raise Me Up" and some of our "Favorite Things."

*Yes* to months of practice, the beauty of their singing, the courage of the first note. *Yes* to every last one of them nodding and bowing and their audience rising and applauding.

Thus do *silver white winters melt into spring*.

*Yes* to love that does such things.



"The Annunciation," tempera painting and gold on wood, circa 1485-92 by Botticelli (Metropolitan Museum of Art)

[Joan Sauro, a Sister of St. Joseph of Carondelet, publishes widely in the Catholic press. "We were called Sister" (U.S. Catholic) was awarded first place for Best Essay 2014 by the CPA. ]