

Dear Tom,

MANY years ago, as we completed the first year of CVV, you went home to St. Louis, and we wrote you a letter. It went something like this.

Dear Tom, It has been quite a year. A year of growing and figuring things out. A year of joys and conflicts. A year of mandatory versus choice. A year of knowing what might work best for our "formation" time and should we even call it that. A year of looking at a syllabus and trying to adapt it from an academic world to a pastoral world. A year of discerning what this CVV program looks like.

Are we on the same page? We are wondering how this will work.....not only this CVV thing, but also our staff working together to make it happen. Please advise.

And you reminded us of this letter often.....remember, I have that letter!

Today we write you a new letter, (hopefully to replace it) and as we remember those early years, we realize that some words by Thomas Merton aptly apply: *"You do not need to know precisely what is happening, or exactly where it is all going. What you need is to recognize the possibilities and challenges offered by the present moment, and to embrace them with courage, faith and hope."*

As they say, hind sight is so helpful that it would have been useful for us to know during that first year. And yet, the very experience of working through the planning and the discernment blesses us and blesses the process. It is, after all, what we have to work with. It is the raw elements that have given rise to a program that continues to be tweaked and made relevant for the times. You are at the core of how we have come to this "way" of co-creating and the ongoing development that is vital to its growth.

You have done this in so many ways, but particularly through your attention to mission and to the table. How many times did you say to us, "What is the mission? How does it fit with our mission? Are we going astray from the mission, or are we truly embracing it?" Even when you are not physically with us, we hear these questions over and over again, guiding us to focus on our particular mission.

AND the table. Particularly the Eucharistic table. How often have you said, "Taken, Blessed, Broken, Shared?"

So today, we do the same.

Taken. 26 years ago, you chose to take on the role of Chaplain. You left behind family and friends to come to Denver, live in community, and shape the role of Chaplain for us at CVV. Not to mention enjoying the mountains. But there is always sacrifice, which you always take as your gift.

Blessed. How do we take life and make it holy, bless it, as you so beautifully bless the bread, the wine, and the community. "Therefore, O Lord, we pray: may this same Holy Spirit graciously sanctify THESE offerings, that they may become the Body + and Blood of our Lord Jesus Christ for the celebration of this great mystery, which he himself left us as an eternal covenant."

You not only bless us, but you also recognize the ways that we bless one another, day to day, wearing the cross, sharing the suffering, mucking around in human existence, touching one another's humanity. Again we hear from Thomas Merton.

"The eyes of the saint make all beauty holy and the hands of the saint consecrate everything they touch to the glory of God."

(Story shared by Jimmy)

Broken Ahhhhh, but to be broken is to experience the very essence of being human. And yet, so many of us want to avoid this. In your life, you have experienced brokenness over and over again, and have embraced this brokenness, as a gift of humility, of solidarity, of the need to BE broken so as to share it with others. These past few years of hip infections and replacement, of physical pain, of losing ability to walk, of difficulty with hearing.....all of these and more have allowed you to touch your own brokenness with the brokenness of the world, the brokenness of us as individuals, the brokenness of our program. In all of this you help us to recognize the gift in the brokenness, the vulnerability of each person, the sometimes shattered hopes of the world. You bring the hope that is found

IN the brokenness. Then, we are able to share this deepened dependence on God with the broken world. This is a hope that is hard to understand, but is so very real and absolutely necessary for us to face many of the world's conflicts and struggles. It is something beyond understanding. It is mystery. And it is reminiscent of Thomas Merton as he speaks of our oneness with God.

"The deepest of level of communication is not communication, but communion. It is wordless ... beyond speech ... beyond concept."

Story from Jeff Peterson read by Jarrod

It is this communion that WE are now called to: a way to take, to bless, to break, and to share as you have truly modeled for us. It is a command to be challenged by these 25 years of joy and struggle, 25 years of taking, blessing, being broken and now sharing with others. It is a response to your challenge of living the mission, at the table, with all who come to hear and to speak truth. It is our call as individuals and as a community of Colorado Vincentian Volunteers to heed in our broken world today.

Story from Carla

Words of thanks seem insufficient for speaking of a life that has been blessed and broken for others. You have modeled for us a Vincentian way, and we are forever deeply grateful beyond words.

Blessings, Peace and Love,
Mary Frances and Bill and all of CVV

Gift of picture
Words from Tom