

**Sarah Granger's Reflection at Mass**  
**St. Andrew Church**  
**Oct. 3, 2010**

Increase our faith...this is what the apostles said to Jesus, and we too say: Increase our faith. I am so glad we are celebrating Hazel's baptism today. Baptism liturgies are very special here at St. Andrew. Of course we all love the Starry Crown dance, but the liturgies are special because together we baptize and we welcome, and together, we hope, our faith is deepened and increased. Communal baptisms are special because the parents who are baptizing their child today, Amy and Paul, are bearing witness to us. In community, they are intentionally making a choice to commit themselves to living their faith and to raising their child in a family, in a community, where their faith is at the center of their lives. It's an incredible witness for all of us and it's a reminder that we too are a part of this. Each and every one of us, through our baptism, is called to live our faith with intention, to deliberately make life choices that are informed by the Gospel values of love, forgiveness and justice.

So, what do we do when we feel like we are losing our faith?

When the ways of our church are not increasing our faith?

What do we do when doubt engulfs us?

What do we do when we are paralyzed by injustice and anger and fear?

What do we do when we feel uninspired to love, to forgive, to work for justice?

That is where some of us are today. And I want to honor and acknowledge that that is a painful place.

Today I was asked to speak about justice. It is the first Sunday of mission month here at St. Andrew, and this past week many of us received a letter from Fr. Chuck asking us to contemplate the mission of St. Andrew and to reflect on our personal commitment to the mission. At the center, at the core, of our St. Andrew mission and the mission of the Gospel is the call to work for justice. St. Andrew has had a long tradition of being a community committed to social justice, a community of individuals who are passionate about working for justice. That is why a lot of us have been drawn to St. Andrew, and why we want to baptize and raise our children in this community. The One Spirit One Call event and movement is now a part of that long tradition.

I'd like to share the story of One Spirit One Call by sharing my own story. Five months ago I had a very significant transition in my life. After being at home with

my two children for two and a half years, I went back to work part time. For about the last year of being a stay-at-home mom I experienced a great deal of depression and frustration. I wasn't experiencing balance in my life, and I was feeling hopeless because I didn't know how to make a change. I knew I was discontented not working, but I also knew that I couldn't go back to my former career working in the Church, because I wanted to be a leader and, as you know, women can only lead so much in the church. The structures of the Catholic Church are disempowering for women, and I knew that out of protection for my own wellbeing and self-growth I could no longer work in the Church.

In April, I applied and was offered a part-time job working on policy for Multnomah County Commissioner Barbara Willer. I was excited about this job and believed that with it would come some happiness. But what happened totally shocked me: When I started work I experienced a crisis in confidence, an incredible amount of paralyzing anxiety, and I was overwhelmed with feelings of not being good enough. I struggled with trusting in myself and my abilities. This was a really dark and painful time.

As I was starting to come out of this darkness, I got an email from Mary Ann Dickey with the Irish Times article about Jennifer Sleeman. It was on a Tuesday morning in mid-August that I learned about this 80-year-old Irish Catholic woman who was calling all women in Ireland to stand up for their dignity in the Catholic Church on Sept. 26. Like many, she too was fed up with the injustices in the institutional church and was pushed to action when the Vatican published a document that listed both the ordination of women and pedophilia as grave offenses against church law.

So from a wise woman on the other side of the world came this message, this call, empowering women to raise their voices for justice. And although I still was feeling overwhelmed and powerless, I was deeply inspired by Mrs. Sleeman's call. I was inspired, one, by the fact that she hasn't given up on the church and, two, by the fact that she believes; she trusts that her voice and her opinion and what she does matter and she isn't ashamed to say that. I was deeply inspired because that is what I want to believe in my heart of hearts.

Many, many others were also inspired by Jennifer Sleeman's call.

The idea of having an event on Sept. 26 surfaced and on Aug. 22 we had our first planning meeting for One Spirit One Call, which was held last Sunday in the Park Blocks. Over 40 women showed up for that first planning meeting and the interest in the One Spirit One call event grew exponentially each week. Because of the incredible interest and timing, and the synergy that quickly developed, early on it became clear that this was becoming more than just an event, and that this needs to be a movement in the church.

The spirit guided us as we planned OSOC, and informed every aspect of the planning and of the event. Our work for justice in the church was and is completely connected to our personal stories and experiences. Our work for justice was and is motivated by both feelings of hope and feelings of pain. Our work for justice is rooted in our core belief in our goodness and giftedness as women, which comes from our loving God.

Last Saturday there was an article about One Spirit One Call on the front page of the Oregonian. Because of this article people who have left the church found out about the event and decided to come. In addition to Catholics from over 45 parishes, fallen-away Catholics were among the 600 people that came to One Spirit One Call. At the event they reconnected with their faith and were inspired and empowered to participate in working for justice.

We are all called to be midwives of justice. The seed of this call is planted at baptism and when we renew our baptismal vows we are encouraged to reflect on how we are answering this call. Today, as we celebrate Hazel's baptism, and as we come together in the Eucharist, let us recommit ourselves to being with each other in our pain and in our hope. Let us take the risks involved in sharing our stories with one another. And together let us continue to be midwives of justice in our church and in our community.