



LIVING FEARLESS – Nano Nagle

By Natalie Slieter

“You see it has pleased the Almighty to make me succeed, when I had everything as I may say, to fight against.”

- Venerable Nano Nagle

“In order to set fear aside, I believe having a foundation of faith is most important and then having strong relationships with individuals such as my family and people I work with. I need to be comfortable with who I am and place my trust in God and that my religious beliefs will carry me forward.”

- David Flicek, President and CEO of Avera McKennan

To act fearlessly doesn't mean ignoring fear. Rather it is the ability to take action in the midst of our fear, moving beyond our comfort zone to do what we know is right and to go where we are called.

Nano Nagle lived 300 years ago during a time of oppression and social injustice of Catholicism and those who practiced it in Ireland. After completing school in France, she returned to Ireland. What she encountered devastated her. While in France, she had lived high in society and a sophisticated lifestyle, while the people of the Catholic church back in Ireland were dealing with oppression and poverty.

“She knew she had to do something for her people,” Sister Deb Nelson said.

That's when Nano opened schools in secret to teach children who were denied an education due to their choice of religion. What she was doing affected not only her, but her family as well. The cost of her actions could have meant imprisonment, loss of land, and death, instead she chose to act with courage and be fearless.

Her vision was that people needed to respond to the social injustices around the world and help the outcasts in society, very much like Jesus who associated himself with sinners.

“She did what she felt was right in her heart,” Sister Deb said. “She became a sign of hope, a light in the darkness, not letting fear stop her.”

Nano's fearlessness lit a fire in the Sisters who continue to this day to believe all people are interconnected and the importance of working with those in the margins of society in order to have a more just and peaceful world. The Presentation Sisters, like Sister Deb Nelson of Aberdeen, focus on peacemaking and assisting in constructive dialogue within communities across the globe and are in 24 countries around the world. They also work internationally with the United Nations on global issues.

Sister Deb encourages the Sioux Falls community to show fearlessness by taking small steps. For Sister Deb, traveling to Africa was not something she woke up deciding to do, but she did

decide to take small steps to prepare herself and kept her heart and mind open, which led to her going across the world to help those in need.

“We need to own our fear and not let our fear own us or stop us,” Sister Deb explained. “We need to be willing to move out of our comfort zones and perform small acts of courage every day, in order to be ready to take the big steps when needed. By living fearlessly, we can be the best version of ourselves.”

She suggests getting to know people you wouldn't ordinarily reach out to, standing up for what you believe in, calling your Congressional representative when seeing an injustice, helping someone in need, or taking on new experiences. Also, learning to give to others, being grateful, and learning to forgive and offer forgiveness will help you learn to live fearlessly.



Sister Deb Nelson has taken action in the midst of fear in much of her work, including ministering in Zambia, Africa for several years. She currently works as the Simulation Lab Coordinator at Presentation College in Aberdeen. To learn more about her, Nano Nagle or the Presentation Sisters, please visit www.presentationisters.org.