

Reflections by Patricia Flynn, SSND
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“History (with its dramatic events) has, so to speak, broken through the sound barrier.” This is how a journalist characterized the recent developments in Europe. Many people called them “unexpected”, “incomprehensible,” “crazy”, “wonderful”, “miraculous.” Politicians spoke of “a geographical revolution,” of “the beginning of a new era.” Some of our East European sisters spoke of the now of their “moment of salvation history” in which the words of Christ ring clear to each of us:...”May they be one in us..” (SSND Constitution, *You Are Sent*, C1)

To some degree, oneness has happened. The WALL which separated families in the same city for 28 years, and the IRON CURTAIN (named so by Winston Churchill in 1946) which cut Europe into two parts for 44 years, no longer concretizes division and oppression; they are open. Their pieces – carried to all parts of the world – have become symbols of solidarity, freedom, unity.

This is a moment of salvation history that allows the nations in East Europe to once again experience or move toward the realization of their human rights! And many of us SSNDs are citizens of, or neighbors to these countries.

The eleven weeks which we spent with our sisters in the provinces/region of East and West Europe proved how intertwined we are

- with the world as “the concrete situation in which we carry out Christ’s mission” (YAS, Prologue) and
- with one another as members of the same congregation and the same human family (YAS, Prologue), no matter where we live.

Both in the East and in the West, the breath-taking political events shaped the conversations and the prayers of the sisters and led them to plan how to immediately expand and/or adjust their life and ministry to the needs and possibilities of the changing continent.

Freedom and unity encompass more than only the desire that “East/West Berlin” again be Berlin, East and West Germany become one in the re-unified Germany, East and West European nations together move into the European House.

As we move toward the 3rd millennium, the struggle for freedom and unity challenges us, in the East and West, in the North and South,

- to treasure freedom with its many choices and to take on the responsibility of choosing
- to be willing to let go even of certain rights and values which are good for the greater good of freedom and unity

- to live out the conviction that forgiveness and reconciliation are possible and necessary'
- to offer help or to give access to our homes and hearts to those in need
- to balance tradition with openness and find new structures for new situations
- to work together for necessary changes that lead to a better future
- to courageously respond to the call to mission amidst political/social/economic changes
- to believe and act out of the belief that God alone is the source and the goal of freedom and unity.

"The power of freedom is stronger than concrete and steel," (Otto Graf Lambsdorff); it has broken the communistic system. We stand together with our European brothers and sisters as they struggle for more humane societies based on the Christian belief of the human being as creature and image of God. The bells rang out at Red Square in Moscow on January 1 – the first time after 70 years – an invitation to new beginnings, to glasnost and perestroika (openness and restructuring), to the renewal of ourselves and our world.

Let us embrace this moment of salvation history as a step toward the realization of Christ's desire:

"May they be one...in us." John 17, 21 (*You Are Sent*, "Mission," #1.)