

Reflection by Sr. Melanie Paradis  
December 6, 2017  
M. Clara Pfaender's Birthday  
and Remembrance of the Sisters  
who died on the Deutschland

This is a multilayered feast day. We have the feast of St. Nicholas, the birthday of M. Clara, and the remembrance of the sisters who died on the wreck of the Deutschland. What do they have in common? What connects these three?

St. Nicholas a bishop from third century Turkey. He is now known as special to children. In his time he had a reputation for being aware of the needs of his people. He was born in a rich family and used his wealth to help the poor. In particular, according to legend, he secretly provided the dowry for the three daughters of a poor man who without this money would have been sold into slavery. It is said he threw three bags of gold through a window and they landed in the shoes and stockings left before the fire to dry.

He was present to his people and offered the gifts needed for life to go on.

M. Clara, foundress of a religious congregation from 19<sup>th</sup> century Germany. Her father was the mayor of Hallenburg. Her mother died when she was young. She learned to help take care of her younger siblings and to help in her father's office.

She was aware of the needs of her times and birthed a congregation that provided the opportunity for us to be here today, and for life to go on.

The 5 Sisters, first leadership team being sent to the United States by M. Clara. They were willing to leave their families, community, homeland, all they knew to sail across the Atlantic and be of service in an unknown land. When the ship they were sailing on wrecked off the coast of England, they gave up their places in the life boats for others. Not once, but twice, they answered a need, offered their lives as gift, and gave others the opportunity for life to go on.

Each one: St. Nicholas, M. Clara, the 5 sisters, was aware of the needs around them and acted upon those needs by offering a gift that gave others life, for life to go on. They had what Paul prays for the Philippians in the first

reading: And this is my prayer: that your love may increase ever more and more in knowledge and every kind of perception, to discern what is of value.

Now let's look at the secondary characters of each of these stories. They are the ones who carry on the legacy. The three daughters who were able to get married, the community, that is us and the ones who were in the lifeboats. The daughters married, had families, lived on. We have become a congregation that has spread across the world, we live on. The ones in the lifeboats went back to whatever they were doing, had families and they lived on.

As I reflected on these figures and events, what came to me was the theme of our Chapter and more recently the theme of the Plenary Council meeting: Go forth! Be a blessing in the heart of the world. When we do this we are able to answer the question asked of Phillip in the gospel, "Sir, we would like to see Jesus."

And I think the challenge for us each day is:

How have we been aware of the needs around us? How have we been Gift? How are we living the life offered us to the fullest? Where are we helping life to go on?

And M. Clara will be able to again say with confidence: The sun is still above and will again bring light into this darkness.