

58. *The Hills are Alive with the Sound of Music*

Just a generation or two back, from wealthy and poor homes came young women who joined convent teaching orders. They gave up everything and made a solemn vow of poverty, chastity and obedience. In their ordination service they were given a ring to signify that they were married to Jesus. This made them a very tangible part of the Bride of Christ.

In our modern age sensuality is a given, and comfort taken as a right. But for these women they ate what was set before them, slept in a bunkhouse, and lived a frugal and very regimented lifestyle. They surrendered the right to even go beyond the campus boundary, and had regulated contact with people including members of their own families. Access to the media was restricted. They owned neither key nor purse for neither had a use. These sisters taught large classes and were in church services before the break of day-every day. By the time students were playing on the school grounds, the teaching nun had prayed for each one, and all connected to the learning community. The lessons had been steeped in prayer even before the roll/register was called and the flag raised for another day.

Often their clothes, the habit, were restrictive and archaic. Fashion and comfort were not considerations in the design. The vow of obedience might mean that the head nun, the “Mother Superior”, could well designate the teaching service to be overseas in distant and dangerous zones, or in remote and Spartan schools within the homeland. There was a trust that God would work His purposes through the authority structures in place within the order.



This morning as I face another day of teaching, my need for creature comforts are certainly met at my school. I eat and drink what I choose and dress professionally to my own taste. I enjoy privacy and considerable choice within my day. My quick prayer time in the morning reflects nothing of the depth of devotion of the nuns, and I certainly own all manner of devices and things to assist me in my day and to augment my identity. My principal might not affirm me all that much, or always give me easy duties, but I am not submitted in any deep and life-long way to her. My hardest day seems easy comparatively, and freedom to choose the relaxation and diversion of my weekend pursuits await me. Unlike Maria Von Trapp, and all nuns like her, I am free to frolic at will.

I count my blessings and commit to moan and complain a little less today, and to draw inspiration from all who have gone before me in this sacred ministry of working as a Christian teacher.

In the same way, any of you who does not give up everything he has cannot be my disciple. Luke 14:33

<http://www.sound-of-music.com/>

Mary MacKillop's teaching order

<http://www.sosj.org.au/mary/mary.html>