

HOMECOMING CELEBRATION HOMILY
Sister Kathleen Kluthe, President
July 26, 2009

Danke schoen, gracias, dhanyavad, nanni, thank you for coming to our fifth Homecoming Celebration and Liturgy on this 135th Anniversary of our International Congregation of the School Sisters of St. Francis.

In 1985, we invited the women who had shared life with us to gather for our first homecoming. It came out of a mutual desire to come together to celebrate and bless and heal our memories...some joyful, some painful.

The reason former aspirants are invited for the first time this year is a response to coming to know that some of you have been meeting as a group since your return home in the 60's. We realize and are utterly amazed to hear how deeply you were affected by your short time with the School Sisters of St. Francis.

Homecoming is a time for us as School Sisters of St. Francis to say WELCOME HOME and thank you for the life you have and continue to share with us.

It is a time to come together to rekindle friendships and make new ones.

It is a time when we realize how important our roots are and how important each person is with whom we have grown up over the years.

Today we invite each of you to rediscover the rich culture and traditions of our multicultural and international congregation spread throughout the world in North and South India, Latin America, Europe and the United States.

Today we invite you to continue to partner with us, as so many of you already do, in our mission to: "BE THE FACE OF THE GOSPEL AND CHANGE THE FACE OF THE WORLD".

Mothers Alexia, Alfons, and Clara took the necessary risks to cross an ocean in 1874 in order to follow their prophetic dream because they listened deeply to an inner call. With a global vision they responded to the great needs of their time. May this homecoming celebration give each of us the energy, wisdom and strength to recommit ourselves to listen deep within so that we can translate the Foundresses belief to today's reality: "THE NEEDS OF THE TIME ARE THE WILL OF GOD".

The Ephesians reading today is perfect for a homecoming celebration.

"Do all you can to preserve the unity of the Spirit through the peace that binds you together."

What binds us together?

We have shared life together, whether it was for one year as an aspirant, postulant, or novice or for 20 or more years. We are truly sisters to one another for we have been imbued with the same spirit, mission and vision and these have remained with us on the journey of life through all these years. Many of you have remained very closely connected to our International Congregation of the School Sisters of St. Francis.

This unity is "of the Spirit." It is a unity that starts deep within each of us and works outward into actions. It is living and full of energy.

The chorus of qualities in the first verses of chapter 4: humility, gentleness, patience, and bearing with one another in love provide an environment that is essential for a true and lasting community spirit. It is not so much a program that creates this community spirit and environment, but rather it is relationships that have been built and sustained over the years and that influence what an individual remembers from years past.

Seven times in verses 1 through 6 the numeral one is found: one body, one Spirit, one hope, one Savior, one faith, one baptism, one God and Creator of all. Do we get the point? We are called to be one family regardless of color, age, gender, religion, or culture.

The story of the loaves and fishes and the feeding of the 5000 plus is so appropriate for our homecoming liturgy and celebration. We know it is a very important teaching because it is the only miracle story found in all four Gospels. Jesus sees a need through his eyes of compassion; the people are hungry and need food. He simply does what needs to be done. It speaks of God's remarkable generosity and abundance.

Seeing the vast crowds approaching, Jesus teasingly asks Philip: *"Where shall we buy bread for these people to eat?"* As it was, Philip sees no solution. Being realistic and practical, Philip says, *"Not even with 200 days wages could we buy loaves enough to give each of them a mouthful."* Like Philip, isn't it true that, at times, what prevents us from taking positive action is often the realistic assessment that the little we are able to do is not really going to make any appreciable difference?

Then Andrew, Peter's brother, points out a small boy with 5 barley loaves and 2 fish. Barley was the cheapest kind of bread. It was only the very poor who would eat barley loaves. Obviously, that amount would not go very far but it is all that Jesus needs. This small boy was picked out of the crowd and asked to share his precious lunch. **He plays a crucial role.** It was his tiny contribution which made it possible for the whole crowd to be filled and satisfied. It is typical of Jesus to make use of someone, a very insignificant person, in the doing of his work. This happens all the time. How many times am I, like this small boy, chosen to be an instrument of God's work? Do I recognize a person that I might regard as being of no importance who is in fact bringing me something from God? Do I recognize God's presence in what needs to be done? The needs of the time are the will of god!

The small boy shared what he had but the Lord gave the increase. All had enough and more than enough to satisfy their hunger and the disciples gathered what was left and filled 12 baskets. When God gives, God gives abundantly. God gives more than we need for ourselves that we may have something to share with others, especially those who lack what they need. God takes the little we have and multiplies it for the good of others.

God needs us to share our "five loaves and two fish" in order to feed the hungry world. If you want a miracle, give something away to make room for God's abundance.

As individuals, as communities and as a world, we suffer all kinds of hunger – for food and water, for love, for peace, for compassion. There is a great deal of healing needed. By coming together today for this homecoming and by sharing the bread of our lives, may each of us receive new life and new energy for being the face of the gospel and thereby changing the face of the world.

We are called to be one in heart, spirit and soul. In deep gratitude, let us celebrate this oneness today!