

JUBILEE HOMILY
Saturday June 16, 2018
Sister Angela Ireland

Today, with Mary, we say from the bottom of our hearts: “My soul proclaims your greatness, O God! My spirit rejoices in you, my Savior! You have looked upon us your servants with favor, and we are called blessed!” Amen! and let the people say: AMEN!

On this day, and throughout this year of Jubilee, we recall your glorious deeds, O God - all that you have done for us each and every day of our lives! We recall, O God, Your grace bestowed on us - in abundance! Marveling at Jesus’ Word and promise, “I have come that you may have LIFE! and have it - to the full! - in abundance! Amen! AMEN!

This life in abundance is knowing God’s compassion, mercy, forgiveness, freedom, and most of all, love. We trust that our works, faith, and just deeds, as St. Paul remarked to the Corinthians, have brought greater glory to You, O God. Amen! AMEN!

Today is a wondrous day! We remember all of the deeds done, service given. You led us through the desert times in our ministry and community life. Especially we remember those of great significance in our lives: family, teachers, clergy, the many people with whom we have ministered, including our beloved deceased sisters who have gone before us. As shining stars they lit the way for us to respond in faith!

Remembering all that has transpired in our religious lives, from the moment of our call, to discernment, decision, and response, it is like looking back through a kaleidoscope and discovering a beautiful mosaic in the fabric of our lives!

As with Mary, we received a call from God. For some it was a voice, or an experience of the presence of God. We even remember where we were when we became sure about our ‘call,’ our ‘vocation.’ The experience amazed us, as it did Mary, maybe even shocked us. Who, how, what are you asking of me, my God!?

It was a leap of faith for us to arrive at our “Fiat”: Yes, I will respond to Your call – in faith. And so, we came without knowing all the answers, We came from farms, towns, cities across the U.S.A., Europe – Poland, Germany, England – and Asia, China, Central and Latin America. And here we gather 80, 75, 70, 60, 40, 25 years later, able, and wanting to say, sing, whisper our deep gratitude to our faithful God who has been so very loving to us, all along the Way!

As our School Sister of St. Francis Sister Joan Puls writes in *Every Bush Is Burning*, Francis Bernadone, when forced to stand up to his father in public, gave his allegiance to God, “embarking on an obedience to the Gospel.” This was what each of us did publicly at our Reception, here in this Chapel, when we embraced a vowed life of poverty, chastity and obedience. Through searching and listening, our vowed religious lives have unfolded. Our vocation remains intact. Sister Joan states that, “regardless of what changes around us, or what adaptations we make in certain areas of our life, we are committed to preserving and unfolding ‘the call’... an awesome trust.”

Like Mary, Jesus – each of us – along with so many others, committed to living out Gospel values, and to the giving, healing and defending of life. So we stand for the care of creation, justice and peace, reconciliation, non-violence, in support of women. When speaking out for our values and beliefs, we have suffered at times. Maybe entering into “a dark night of the

soul,” of which ‘even’ Mother – now St. Teresa of Calcutta – experienced.

As women religious, we have been sent where we did not expect to go, and done what we would never have expected, in our youth, that we could do. As Mary birthed Jesus into the world, we have become, and taught others to become, the head, heart, hands, and feet of Jesus in our world today.

On this Jubilee Day, we might recall a scripture passage or two that has sustained us throughout our lives, and in moments of uncertainty, enter into silence hearing the words of Jeremiah, “I know the plans I have for you.” says the Lord, “plans of fullness, not of harm, to give you a future and a hope.”

Over the years, we have changed radically, from our appearance to our buildings, to meet the needs of the time. We know what it is to adapt and re-conform ourselves, remaining open to God’s will for us today, and true to our foundress, Mother Alexia, who said “The signs of the times are the will of God.” In our communal life, we find strength, nurturing, and courage to sustain our endeavors.

How many Jubilarians thought, when they were Received in this Chapel, that they would see solar panels on the rooftops of Sacred Heart? How many Jubilarians thought when they were Received that they would see the General Assembly in 2018 held in Bangalore, India?

The Monks of Weston Priory have said, and we, Jubilarians “want to say something to all of you who have become a part of the fabric of our being. The color and texture you have brought into our lives have become a song and we want to sing it forever. And when the time of our particular sunset comes, our thing, our accomplishment won’t really matter a great deal, but the clarity and care with which we have loved others will speak vitality of the great gift of life that we have been for one another.”

So it is that our hearts are filled with Gratitude. We sing praise to our God with full hearts! Today, we proclaim our own ‘Magnificat’! Amen! AMEN!