

Jubilee 2019

Today we come together to celebrate. Our choir did a wonderful opening for us that really says just that.....This is a Day of Celebration

And the Opening Hymn reminds us what we are celebrating.

We are called...We are chosen....We are Christ for one another. All of us are called...all of us are God's chosen people...and all of us are Christ for one another.

What we celebrate today is our Jubilarians choosing to live out their call in this Franciscan Community. Following the example of St. Francis of Assisi and Mother Theresa Hackelmeier, our Jubilarians, 40, 50, 60, 70 and yes even 80 years ago chose to dedicate their entire lives to the service of the God's people, to bringing the message of Jesus to all with whom they come in contact, to making their life's work that of being Christ to others. They have done and continue to do that with graciousness, compassion and with a view to the changing needs of God's people. How do they (or we) become Christ for one another? I certainly have no definitive answer for that but I would like to make a few observations.

If we wish to be Christ for others then we must know who we wish to imitate. Following the example of the disciples in today's Gospel who asked "Lord teach us to pray", Francis of Assisi learned to pray, to open his life up the prompting of Jesus and Francis' life changed dramatically. Our foundress, Mother Theresa's life was changed after she encountered Jesus in prayer. So too, our Jubilarians' lives when they encounter Jesus in prayer. When we take Jesus at his word... ask and it will be given to you, search and you will find, knock and the door will be opened, we never know how that prayer may be answered...but answered it will be and not always the way we may have hoped. The daily commitment to prayer helps to open our lives to the promptings of Jesus in our lives. The daily commitment to prayer helps us to become one with Jesus. Our Vision and Journey tells us to be as Francis was: reverent, humble, joyful and filled with the praise and thanksgiving for the goodness of God. Could not those words be used in describing our Jubilarians? Prayer is the bedrock of their lives and the force that allows them to minister to God's people.

There is a Quaker saying...Let Your Life Speak....and our jubilarians did and continue to do, just that. Most, if not all, began their Franciscan lives in school situations. Thousands of children and young adults, passed through their school doors... all grade levels...kindergarten through university. The students learned to read and write, to do mathematics. They learned history, geography and science. They learned art and music. They learned the doctrine and practice of religion but more importantly they learned God loves them, cares for them, wants the best for them. They learned to pray and to be comfortable in God's presence. Much of what these very lucky students learned was by example, by watching the Sisters assigned to their school, by absorbing the unspoken lessons of a life well lived. God calls us in many ways to do many things...often in ways that we might never anticipate or to do things that we might never have thought we could possibly do or even want to do. As the years move on, as the world changes, as the needs of God's people change, ministry opportunities also change. What has remained constant is being of service to others...of being Christ to others.

40 plus years ago, it is was pretty much thought that almost everyone would be involved in a school ministry.....today when ministry calls us in different directions.....these fearless women heard a variety of calls and answered with their own giftedness. We have teachers, parish administrators, nurses, school and retreat center administrators, spiritual directors, consultants, mental health personnel, administrative assistants, mission effectiveness directors, supervisors of departments and congregational leaders. Their ministry flows from a deep and personal relationship with Jesus. Their ministry, varied as it is, speaks of their faithfulness to the Gospel, their belief in the goodness of others, their trust in the mission of Jesus. The world is blessed by their presence, by their prayer and by their dedication to the mission of spreading God's love to others.

Thank you for being women of prayer. Your unfailing dedication to personal and community prayer inspires us all.

Thank you for being dedicated to your personal ministry which helps us to fulfill the mission of the congregation.

Thank you for your commitment to Community. Your presence among us, your faithfulness to community gatherings, your willingness to share of yourself encourages and inspires.

Thank you for being witnesses to our Franciscan charism. The spirit of Francis and Clare lives on in each of you.

In the first reading today, Abraham is looking for good and holy people. He seems to be doing some bargaining with God about the number of people he is trying to find. I found myself wanting to help Abrahamby saying to him....Abraham, I know where you can find at least 18 good and holy people...they are right here...sitting all together in the front rows.....we are celebrating them today. And Abraham, if you look around in here today.....you will find lots more good and holy people.

And to our Jubilarians.....Your lives are speaking. You are good and holy people. You are Christ for all you meet. You are hope for God's people. You are light.

God's best blessings on your Jubilee

Peg Maher