

## Jubilee Reflections by Sister Mary Catherine Barron, CSJ, Golden Jubilarian, March 16, 2013



Welcome to this wonder-filled day?! I would like to salute all of the Jubilarians on this milestone occasion and say just a little about each reception before us. The group celebrating 75 years today were known as "the workers." Whenever there was a job to be done, they were able and ready. How emblematic of their patron Joseph who was always humbly ready to serve.

The reception celebrating 70 years attest to the fact that because they were 12, they called themselves "the 12 apostles." They were 12 in number taking first vows and remained 12. No one left after the novitiate. Whenever they were called upon to entertain, they always sang McNamara's Band - all verses.

Whenever anyone got bad news or "got into trouble", she had her own Consolation of the Afflicted, S. Joseph Andrew. And the 12 could always count on bushels of apples and farm products from Margaret Scrodin's father's farm.

The sisters celebrating 60 years were called "the hot dog reception" and we know that there are some hot dogs in this group! They earned this appellation because they were served - that's right - hot dogs the night they entered. They are truly a close reception and always get together at least once a year, usually in the summer when Gio comes for a home visit.

Welcome home today, Gio!

And then we come to the last illustrious group –the reception celebrating 50 years. You are probably discerning a pattern here: we started with the stalwart "workers," moved to the "12 apostles," descended to the "hot dogs" and are finishing with what S. Elizabeth Thomas somewhat despairingly called "the New Breed" - a fiercely independent group of spirited women who questioned EVERYTHING. Sister Elizabeth said (rather prophetically) that we were "all chiefs and no Indians." Many of us were labeled "three sheets to the wind" but Lauren achieved the greatest claim to fame when Sister Elizabeth christened her after a character from Dickens: the beautiful spacey "Dolly Varden."

So there you have it, Sisters - a group of committed, joy-filled, women of the Gospel of the Sisters of St. Joseph of Carondelet- the Jubilarians of 2013!

### **And the word of the Lord came to Abram:**

"Go forth from the land of your kinsfolk and from your father's house to a land that I will show you...Between you and me I will establish my Covenant. Abram went as the Lord directed him." *And he was never the same.* Abram was God touched. In faith and with a full heart, he began

the journey that would keep him ready and expectant for the rest of his life. Through joy and adversity, through pain and fulfillment, through doubt and hope, Abram moved steadily on – to Canaan, to Egypt, to Bethel – always with the promise of the Covenant sustaining the arduous trek. And because Abraham was faith-filled and faithful, Yahweh presented the ultimate test. “Take your son Isaac, your only one, whom you love and go to the land of Moriah. There you shall offer him up as a holocaust.” What emotional depths did Abraham descend to in that three day’s journey? With what tenacity of hope did he cling to the words of the Covenant – “I will make your descendants as countless as the stars of the sky and the sands of the seashore.” And with what angelic blessing was Abraham’s faith vindicated when the messenger of God proclaimed: “I know now how devoted you are to God since you did not withhold your own beloved son.”

**David** certainly echoed what Abraham must have felt when he composed Psalm 89: “The favors of the Lord I will sing forever; through all generations my mouth shall proclaim your faithfulness.” David himself made a long and circuitous journey – from ruddy shepherd boy to charismatic king – from the favored of Saul to the hunted one – from great ecstasy dancing before the Ark to great sin in marrying Bathsheba. But through it all David believed in the Lord’s fidelity to the Covenant. “I have made a Covenant with my chosen one; I have sworn to David my servant. Forever I will maintain my kindness toward him and my Covenant with him stands firm.” It is this utter belief in the faithfulness of Yahweh to him, that sustains David in his moments of brokenness and shame – and that precipitates his healing and restoration to grace – and all of those heartfelt psalms.

**St. Paul**, that most peripatetic of men, whose journeys are legendary in terms of miles covered and sufferings borne, made the most difficult expedition – the trip to self-knowledge. Blindly persecuting the newly formed group of Christians in Damascus, Paul himself was rendered physically blind for three days. Touched by Ananias, the scales fell from Paul’s eyes and *he* was never the same. For he, too, became an ardent believer of the Covenant – the new Covenant forged by Jesus through his life, death and resurrection. Throughout the then known world, Paul proclaimed the Christ and his teachings: “This cup is the new Covenant in my blood. Do this in remembrance of me.”

**Abraham, David, Paul.** So where, you rightfully ask, are the women in all of this? Here we are, Sisters– Jubilarians All – because each of us here today is celebrating her own special journey and her own special experience of the Lord’s Covenant in her heart. We all have had our Abraham moments – hearing the call, leaving our father’s house, embarking on the journey, being tested along the way. And we all have been with David in our moments of ecstasy and our moments of pain. We have been thrust into great heights and plummeted to great depths – but always the sustaining Covenant has steadied us along the way. Sometimes, in our fervor,

we have strayed from the right path as did Paul. Sometimes we have been blind in our pursuit of perceived justice or righteousness or accepted norms. The journey has not always been easy or smooth or straight. But the Covenant has always been there – firm and true.

And **Jesus** said: “I consecrate myself for them, so that they also may be consecrated in truth. I pray not only for them *but also for those who will believe in me through their word.*” That Sisters, is the promise of “descendants as countless as the stars of the sky and the sand of the seashore.” Jesus promises: “I have given them the glory you gave me... *Father, they are your gift to me.*”

So what do we have to fear – no matter what the future brings? We are on the journey; we possess the Covenant; we have this “great cloud of witnesses” who testify to God’s fidelity and we have Jesus, the great high priest, who steadfastly embarked on his three day journey from garden to mount to tomb – and then to glorious Resurrection!

So this is, indeed, a Day of Jubilee! – a Day of Liberation! - a Day of Joy! And so, In conclusion I pray for all of us with Joy and Faith and Love the words of Dag Hammarskjold from his diary *Markings*: “For all that has been, THANKS! For all that will be, YES!” Amen! Alleluia!