

Jubilee Introduction by Sister Lauren Van Dermark, Golden Jubilarian, March 16, 2013



On this most amazing day, this chapel, this community, these Jubilarians are alive with the splendor of God.

As I look out at these women who join together to celebrate this special milestone in their life's journey, I am reminded of the story in the Sufi tradition... a young woman asks an older woman in her village... "What is life's heaviest burden and she answers to have nothing to carry!"

We have much to carry because of our life together . This is what we celebrate today the fidelity of commitment and the gift of generativity. It is so well said in the words of our Constitution..."strengthened by our life together, we turn beyond ourselves to serve a world in need"

It is no mere coincidence that we design our celebration of Jubilee by decades... our lives have intersected through the years creating patterns and themes that have become such an integral part of our individual and communal lives. In the poem, *I Will Not Die An Unlived Life*, Dawna Markova expresses it so well: *The seeds planted by one group are nurtured, pruned, watered so that which came to us as seed, goes to the next in bloom and that which came to us as blossom, goes on as fruit...* the true gift of generativity.

You who responded to the call 75 and 70 years ago, came from a world that was coming out of a great Depression and now involved in another World War. It was not a time for the faint hearted! During your early years, the Congregation celebrated its 100th anniversary of its establishment in America. The debt for the Seminary in Troy which was the province center was paid off and the first overture from RPI College to purchase the property was offered to Provincial leadership. Our sponsored works of College of Saint Rose and St. Mary's Hospital continued to grow as well as our involvement in the elementary and secondary schools in the Albany and Syracuse diocese. You were our teachers, our mentors, our health care providers and you made the CSJ presence so vital and welcoming to all.

You who responded to the call 60 years ago, came from a world that had survived, the Korean War and were now experiencing the Cold War. Within the Congregation change was coming quickly.... Education was booming... large classes were the norm as the first group of "baby boomers" entered the school system. Schools were being built throughout both dioceses, and parishes were establishing catechetical centers. The Sisters Formation Conference was founded the year after you entered.... It emphasized the continued education needed for women religious.... And so many of you enrolled in those famous "Saturday classes" at the College of Saint Rose as well as spent summers...not swimming But rather taking summer courses. The selling of the Seminary property was negotiated during this time and St. Joseph's convent in South Troy was created as both a retirement center and housing for many of the sisters who were teaching in the schools in the area.. The Provincial House property was also purchased during this time and many of you found yourselves deeply involved.. You were the "Nuns on the Bus"

for us as we saw you board those buses as you embarked from the PH each morning to your places of ministry and then returned in the afternoon as “worker bees” in the myriad of activities needed to prepare and outfit the PH.

It was also during this time that our province engaged in the missionary work of the Congregation ... the first sisters were sent to Japan in 1956 and a steady stream of sisters from the Albany province were sent to Hawaii during the 1950's... then in the early 60's our sisters were called to Peru... some of these women who responded to this call are celebrating Jubilee today.

Then came 1962 and 63,, and we who are celebrating our 50th Jubilee were welcomed into the Congregation as both the Church and the world stood on the precipice of unparalleled change. Vietnam war was beginning and Vatican II opened a month after we entered. The CSJ ministries flourished in both education and health care... sisters were broadening their involvement in ministry options and studies were being pursued in a variety of colleges and universities. In 1963, a branch of the College of Saint Rose was opened and named Rosati College and found its home in the 4 classrooms and labs on the ground floor of the PH. Many of us took part in these classes offered and experienced tremendous relationships with our teachers and enjoyed numerous adventures and stories which to this day still entertain us e.g (Teddy the dog, morality classes, etc. It was both a time of great excitement yet confusion, enthusiasm yet apprehension, opportunity yet challenge for all that was occurring in the Church, the world and the Congregation And the response was the same.... “strengthened by our life together, we turn beyond our selves to serve a world in need.”

May this day and year of Jubilee be for each of us the confirmation of all that has been... we know that the road that lies behind us is the road that frees us for the road ahead. Let the words of the poet, Denise Levertov resonate within each of us and all of us:

We have only begun to imagine the fullness of life We have only begun to love earth

So much is unfolding... How could we tire of hope, so much is in bud

For all that has been... thanks For all that will be ... yes.

And let the celebration continue....

