Reflections shared by Sister Jean Liston at the GNSH Jubilee Mass
April 28, 2018

We are here to celebrate ‘jubilee.’ As you recall from your Old Testament studies, the word ‘jubilee’ calls to mind the concept of joy and jubilation.

*In Biblical times, it was a periodic celebration of justice and peace, it rediscovered harmony in relations between people and their Creator, and it was a general liberation of all persons. Jubilee was a time of forgiveness of debt and rest and revitalization for the earth.*

A few years ago, Pope Francis, in announcing the ‘Jubilee of Mercy’, noted that Jubilee was *a time to change our lives and allow our hearts to be touched.*

**So let us rejoice and celebrate!**

It is with hearts filled with gratitude and joy that we gather here to celebrate our jubilees! 50, 60, 70 years!!

We are grateful for our vocation to religious life, a gift given by God. We are grateful, too, that we had the courage to accept this amazing invitation.

We came to religious life because we listened to the promptings of the Spirit and realized our vocation was the best way for us to know, love, and serve our Creator.

Reflecting on those early days of our discernment reminded me of our Holy Habit ceremony. In that ritual, we stood side-by-side in the front of the chapel while the Bishop asked us a series of questions. One of the questions was *“Do you believe you can worthily honor the vocation to which you aspire?”* Of course, we knew we were not worthy; however, we answered the prepared response in unison *“We have the will and the desire and we pray to obtain the grace through the mercy of God and the prayers and example of our Sisters.”*

Yes, it is through the mercy of God and the unconditional love, unwavering support, and continuous prayers of our Sisters and so many others that we find ourselves here today to celebrate this moment of jubilee.

We offer thanks for the will and the desire to respond to God’s gratuitous call.

The readings today speak of other calls…to remain in God’s love that God’s love might be brought to perfection in us… the call to allow the very life of Christ to flow within us as we live and breathe as fruitful branches nourished by the true vine… the call to live in generosity and
integrity as we fulfill our vows through our lives of prayer and ministry… by giving the gift of love to another, or raising the burden from the shoulders of someone who is struggling, or by teaching a young child to read, or by freeing another from ignorance or want.

Our constitutions state that prayer is our response to God’s invitation to share in the life of the Trinity. Prayer enriches and transforms us. As Grey Nuns, our prayer life is shaped by the spirituality of our foundress St. Marguerite D’Youville, who gave praise to God as the Eternal Father, who placed her trust in Divine Providence, and who embraced the blessings and heartaches of the cross. Prayer is our connection to the very source of love and life.

In the early days of the Grey Nun congregation in Montreal, Marguerite D’Youville and her Sisters gave us examples of how to live lives of prayer and service. These courageous and selfless women served the needs of the homeless, the poor, wounded soldiers, abandoned children, prostitutes, criminals, and anyone in need.

Whenever there was hardship, the people of Montreal would say, “Go to the Grey Nuns. They never refuse to serve.”

Our jubilarians never refused to serve. Each of us began our life in ministry as a teacher. As we developed our gifts, and the needs of society beckoned, we moved into other forms of ministry. We served (or continue to serve) as an administrator, librarian, retreat director, social worker, principal, sacristan, and professor… (believe it or not…for a total of over 400 years!!)

Pope Francis commented, “What would happen if there were no Sisters? No Sisters in hospitals, No Sisters in the missions, No Sisters in the schools. One can’t imagine it! Sisters are the leaven that carry the people of God forward.”

Today, our day of jubilee, we celebrate and continue to carry the people of God forward.

We are indeed “Grateful for the call and Faithful to the Mission.”

Congratulations and God’s choicest blessings, Sisters!