

# Reflection

---

*Offered by Sr. Glenna Czachor  
July 27, 2015*

## **Wheaton Franciscan – Jubilee Celebration Homily**

### **Go Forth! Be a Blessing in the Heart of the World!**

This phrase was the theme of the recent General Chapter meeting held by our Congregation of Franciscan Sisters Daughters of the Sacred Hearts of Jesus and Mary, and is the guiding principle of the wisdom statement for our Congregation for the next six years.

### **Go Forth! Be a Blessing in the Heart of the World!**

As I thought about this statement and the lives of our dear Jubilarians – the more it became apparent to me – this isn't a new thought or a new guiding principle for these women. It is the recognition of the call that these sisters have heard and responded to their whole religious life. For a combined total of 370 years, these women have heard and heeded the call of the Gospel, *to love one another as God has loved them*. They have remained faithful in love, with love and went out into the world seeking ways to be as St. Paul calls us, partners *in spreading the Good News about Christ*.

### **Go Forth!**

The idea of going out – going forth from the comfort of the familiar can be a frightening notion. These brave women found inspiration in the Gospel, courage in the grace of the Holy Spirit, and strength in the companionship of others.

From their birthplaces in Illinois, Wisconsin, Missouri, and Indiana, they heard and heeded God's call. They served in their hometowns and home states – and some were called to work in exotic places such as Colorado, Italy, Brazil... and Iowa!

Going forth from the familiar requires courage and curiosity, ingenuity and endurance. These women delved into the mystery of God. Even when the tasks weren't clear, they went forth with confidence, secure in the gifts they received from the Spirit, and tackled whatever needed to be done.

They served in schools, orphanages and child care centers, providing education, comfort and inspiration to countless children.

They served in our hospitals in a variety of ways: direct patient care, physical therapy, and pastoral ministry; in the business offices and laboratories.

They've served from high levels of position on corporate boards and in elected leadership to serving the poorest of God's people from urban homeless shelters, to missions in the Amazon...and everywhere in between.

They've cared for our precious home, Mother Earth...by planting gardens, harvesting and preparing the bounty they have grown and sharing the fruit of their labor with others.

These women did not sit idly or comfortably at home. They went forth with confidence and courage. And I echo St. Paul with the certainty that God, who began the good work within them, will continue this work through their lives and the work of those whom they have inspired.

### **Be a Blessing!**

Blessing is one of those words that you think you know the meaning of...but then you wonder, what really is the true definition. So, I looked it up.

A blessing is the aid or approval that helps you do something good or that brings about happiness. Isn't that a beautiful thought?! To be a blessing is to bring about happiness!

No matter how far or close from home our Jubilarians went forth – they remained steadfast and secure, clinging to the branch of the vine which is Christ Jesus. With God's blessing, they went forth to be blessing, bringing much help and happiness to everyone they served.

And by their work, they bore much good fruit. The fruit of their labors endures. Our hospitals thrive and continue to serve the sick and the poor, in the capable hands of lay partners whom they have inspired and mentored. The children they cared for have now grown

up and I am confident that they live successful lives, with families of their own because they were nurtured and taught with faith and love by our sisters. Missions and ministries in Brazil are also thriving and today native Brazilian sisters take on more leadership roles because of the mentoring and encouragement they have received.

There is much happiness and goodness in the world because these women gave freely and joyfully.

### **In the heart...**

The heart of anything is its core, the center, the most vital place. It is the also the most vital organ in our body, and the source of all our emotions...but most notably...the source of love.

Love, Mother Clara Pfaender tells us, is the unifying source for the life of our Congregation. Love binds us together, *makes us of one heart, and one soul*. Our Jubilarians have been exemplary models of this ever-flowing love from God, through their lives and their service to God's people. Love has indeed shone forth from their faces, their speech and their manner.

I attended the Franciscan Federation Conference this past week and one of the keynote speakers, a Franciscan theologian, told us that "Love is the prime moral absolute for Franciscans." And I would add, for all persons.

Love is **the** motivating source for everything that we do that is good. Every good action, every good thought, every good emotion begins with love. Doing good, believing in the goodness of all creation is the way we keep God's commandments. Out of love, God created everything in the heavens and on the earth, and declared it all to be...Good! Because we have known love, we can act with love and find complete joy and fullness in the presence of God, who is Love.

### **Of the World...**

Lest you think that going forth, being a blessing and being sources of love in the heart of the world is the work of our Jubilarians alone...let me remind you of the call that each of us has received to respond to God's command.

By virtue of our baptism, we are all anointed with holy chrism and called to become priest, prophet and king. We don't often think about these holy tasks to which every Christian is called.

The God of love does not demand perfection from us. Rather, we partner with God, by remaining faithful to God in the everyday actions of our lives.

We are priestly when we give blessing – help and approval to those we encounter each day. Bringing about simple forms of happiness like a smile or greeting to a store clerk or waitress. A hug to a weary co-worker. In the many ways, big and small, that we show love and give help to our families and friends; By caring for Mother Earth by planting trees, growing vegetables, and conserving her precious resources like water and energy.

We are a prophet when we take risks and go out of our comfort zones. When we go the extra mile at work, or risk taking charge of a project or task. When we educate ourselves about the pressing issues of our culture and times and take a stand by voting, or emailing our representatives in congress.

We are kings and queens when we treat all we meet with love, respect and dignity, recognizing that all those we meet are desiring of love or in need of our help. We accept our royal duty when we steward and care for God's creation, and use wisely the abundant gifts we have received.

***Go Forth! Be a Blessing in the Heart of the World!***

This is my call – this is your call – this is our call. Together we bring the love of God to all people.

*My dear Jubilarians, every time I think of you, I give thanks to my God.*

*And when I pray, I make my requests for all of you with joy!*

Thank you for your faithfulness to your baptismal promises, your vocational call, and the message of the Gospel. I admire you for the countless ways you have demonstrated going forth, being blessing, and bringing love to the world. You are our inspiration, our hope and our joy! May you always feel the blessing and love of God – and complete joy in Christ Jesus.