

**Jubilee Mass Homily
St. Gertrude Monastery
Saturday June 9, 2005 – 11:30 AM**

When Jeannette Murray of Wilmington, Delaware entered the convent in 1945 the world was a different place than now.

In January of that year:

- *Adolf Hitler moved into an underground bunker in Berlin.*
- *Franklin Delano Roosevelt began an unprecedented 4th term of Office as President of the United States.*
- *The Soviet Army liberated the Auschwitz and Birkenau Concentration Camps in Poland.*
- *The Battle of Iwo Jima began in the Pacific in February.*
- *Dietrich Bonhoeffer, a German Lutheran pastor and dissident was hanged at the Flossenberg Concentration Camp on the Czech border on April 8.*
- *F. D. R. died on April 12 and Harry Truman took the oath of office as President.*
- *V-E day commemorated the end of World War II in Europe on May 8.*
- *The charter creating the establishment of the United Nations was signed June 26.*
- *U.S. denotes the first atomic bomb on Hiroshima, Japan at 8:16 AM on Aug. 6.*
- *A second atomic bomb was detonated over Nagasaki at 11:02 AM on Aug. 9.*
- *Japan surrendered on August 15.*
- *Ho Chi Minh took power in Hanoi, Vietnam four days later on Aug. 19.*
- *Mohandas Gandhi demanded that British troops leave India on Sept. 20.*
- *Juan Peron took power in Argentina following a coup in October.*
- *Charles de Gaulle was elected President of France on Nov. 13.*

- *Nuremberg Trials began on Nov. 20th for 24 Nazi war criminals.*
- *U. S. Senate approved the U.S. participation in the United Nations on Dec. 4.*
- *The World Bank was created by 28 industrialized nations on Dec. 27.*

Also in 1945:

- *“Lost Weekend” was the Oscar winning best motion picture.*
- *“Rum & Coca-Cola” was a best hit song by The Andrew Sisters, along with “My Dreams are Getting Better All the Time” by Doris Day & Les Brown.*
- *The Mayo Clinic used streptomycin for the first time as a treatment for TB.*

Some celebrities born in 1945 were:

- *Mia Farrow*
- *Linda Hunt*
- *Tony Dow – “Leave it to Beaver.”*
- *Frederica von Stade – Messo-Soprano*
- *Dean Koontz – Suspense Novelist*
- *Itzhak Pearlman – Violinist*
- *Henry Winkler – The Fonz – “Happy Days.”*

Cordell Hull was awarded the Nobel Peace Prize.

Ten years later, when Mary Agnes Dugan entered the convent in 1955 things were different.

In February of that year:

- *Israel recovered four of the seven Dead Sea Scrolls.*
- *Winston Churchill resigned as Prime Minister of the United Kingdom on April 5.*
- *Tennessee Williams won a Pulitzer Prize for “Cat on a Hot Tin Roof” on May 2.*
- *West Germany became a sovereign nation on May 5 with Bonn as its capital city.*
- *Disneyland opened in Anaheim, CA on July 27.*
- *The first edition of the Guinness Book of Records was published on Aug. 27.*

- *James Dean was killed in an auto accident in California on Sept. 30.*
- *The first International Solar Energy Conference took place in Tucson, AZ in Nov.*
- *A black seamstress named Rosa Parks refused to give up her seat to a white man igniting the American Civil Rights Movement with the Montgomery, Alabama Bus Boycott on Dec. 1.*
- *General Motors became the first American Corporation to post sales over one billion dollars on Dec. 31.*

In Television:

- *The Honeymooners was a hit along with The Mickey Mouse Club*
- *The Patti Page Show began on NBC & The Frankie Lane Show on CBS*

Famous People born in 1955 were:

- *Kevin Costner*
- *John Grisham*
- *Kelsey Grammer*
- *Reba McEntire*
- *Debra Winger*
- *Yo Yo Ma*
- *Bill Gates & Whoopi Goldberg*

*Johnny Cash & Patsy Cline both began their music careers.
The Nobel Peace Prize was not awarded that year.*

A different world and ten years separated these two women. Their love of God and a call to serve the gospel of Jesus Christ as a woman religious united them. Today, 60 and 50 years later respectively we celebrate how the world and church have changed, but the God they still love and serve remains ever so faithful. That is the message God wants to download in our hearts during this Jubilee liturgy.

Hosea, a prophet of Israel, prophesied at a time when the two nations, one in the north and one in the south, were divided after the days of King Solomon. They were disastrous times that ended with Hosea ultimately being taken captive and after a long seize, the capital, Samaria was conquered. Israel was led into exile and the northern kingdom ended.

The central theme of Hosea's oracles is a marriage symbol revealing Yahweh's personal love of his people, faithful even in the face of their gross failings. Chapter's 1-3 recounts an allegorical tale of marriage, children, divorce and remarriage.

The few verses read from chapter 2 refer to the return of the divorcee as symbolizing the restoration of the relationship with Yahweh. Verse 16 implies that Israel must return to the desert as the place to re-establish contact with Yahweh. For Hosea, the desert is the ideal place to seek God. Verse 21 of the oracle designates the price Israel, as the bride, must pay the groom, Yahweh, for a new marriage contract. *Justice* and *Love* is what Yahweh expects as loyal adherence to the covenant partner. The line in verse 22 "*Know the Lord*" is not a religious knowledge of God. Hosea's demand of knowledge of God expects that love should call for love in return. Israel was all too ready to mistake erotic love for covenantal love and that is not what Hosea is calling for here.

The reading from John's gospel continues this theme of faithful love. The eight verses from chapter 15 are part of the Last Discourse of Jesus. They follow the allegory of the Vine and the Branches. In his final teaching to the disciples Jesus reveals that love is the principle of the relation between the Father and the Son. That same love has brought the Church into being. The disciples must keep themselves worthy of the protection of Christ's love. This is done by obedience to the will of Christ by following his example. He is not hinting at a degrading type of obedience practiced between slave and master. Rather, because he calls them beloved he is inviting them to offer a loving obedience that is their part in the common life they share as his followers.

Finally, in the reading from Romans 12:1-13 Paul teaches the community that the Christian life must be lived as a worship in Spirit paid to God. Picking up on Jesus' vision of the common life in the last discourse Paul teaches that the common pursuit of the good is expected of those who are members of the body of Christ and whose lives are expected to be a sacrifice offered to God.

The seven different charismatic gifts that Christians received from the Spirit are clearly destined for the benefit of the whole community. And for Paul genuine love, as esteeming the other more highly, is translated into charitable acts.

What we have here is a message of God's faithful love passed on by a prophet, an evangelist and an Apostle. It has been the energy that has fueled two women religious passing it on to others through their commitment to the Benedictine monastic tradition for the past 60 and 50

years respectively. Love of God has made this day possible for us and love of religious life has made life meaningful for them.

Because Jubilees are all about faithful love of a God who won't let go this day is not just about today. It is also about tomorrow and the future. The future of how the faithful love of God will be envisioned and lived depends on how we make that vision happen.

Hosea the Prophet, John the Evangelist and Paul the Apostle stretched their communities to envision how to live lives of faithful love of God outside the box. For Hosea it was how to get the nation Israel out of the box that treated a selfless God selfishly. For St. John it was getting his community out of the box of living a life of obedience to Christ that transcended slavery. For St. Paul it was challenging the Christians in Rome to think outside the box about their spiritual gifts given for the common good.

Religious life in the 21st century must do the same if it is to survive. If not, then the box will close, trapping those inside, keeping God from getting out and keeping others from getting in.

What we are about today is what the liturgy of the Word is about every day, vision and vocation. God's vision of being a faithful lover and our vocation to pass that vision on.

On this Jubilee day my prayer for the Benedictine Community of Ridgely, Maryland is that you will promote both vision and vocation as part of your commitment to religious life. My prayer is that you will market the gospel and your monastic tradition in ways that makes St. Gertrude Monastery a place where both vision and vocation can become one for women who are looking for that connection.

It is not enough that we just celebrate 60 and 50 years of religious life today with a Mass and dinner. These readings compel us to think of God as a faithful lover who expects us to have the passion of Hosea, the insight of John the Evangelist and the creativity of Paul the Apostle in passing on the values of gospel life. Their vision and vocations were the anchors upon which your founder, Benedict thought outside the box and started an alternative way of life in the 6th century that invited others to serve God the faithful lover outside the box as people bound by a monastic rule.

May this Jubilee be an occasion for feasting and for rededicating yourselves to new and exciting ways to keep the vision of your founder alive by the creative ways you invite women to listen to the voice of vocation in their lives outside the box. Benedict had a way of luring people

to God. May you find your own way in doing that and I hope this closing story provides some inspiration.

In her book, *“Women Strength”* Sr. Joan Chittister began the last chapter, *Future of Benedictine Women*, this way.

The Sufi tell a tale that may have a great deal to say about the future of religious life. The story is about a flowing stream that ran into a desert.

This stream, the story teaches, worked itself across the country for ages and experienced little difficulty. It ran easily around the rocks and quickly through the mountains. No obstacle, it seemed, was too much for this fresh and life-giving water. Then, suddenly, it arrived at a desert. Just as it had crossed every other barrier, the stream tried to cross this one, but it found that as fast as it ran into the sand, the waters disappeared. After many attempts, the stream became very discouraged. It appeared that there was no way it could continue the journey.

Then a voice came in the wind. *“If you stay the way you are, you cannot cross the sands. In fact, you will only become a quagmire. To go further, you will have to lose yourself.”*

“But if I lose myself,” the stream cried, *“everything I have ever been will be lost.”*

“Oh, on the contrary,” said the voice. *“If you lose yourself, you will become more of what you were meant to be than you ever dreamed.”*

So the stream surrendered itself to the hot, drying sun. And the clouds into which it was formed were carried by the raging wind for many miles. And once it crossed the desert, the stream poured down from the skies, fresh and clean, and full of the energy that comes from storms.

May this Jubilee day be an occasion for you to become more of what you were meant to be than you ever dreamed so that the Ridgely, Maryland story, like the Sufi story can have a new beginning and a hopeful ending. Amen.