

GOLDEN JUBILEE of 18 Daughters of Charity. Provincial House

March 7, 2020.

Fr. Serafin F. Peralta CM.

I will make a roll call of those who are celebrating today their golden anniversary. When I call your name please say YES: Sr. Paz Mercado, Sr. Prime Borondia, Sr. Pilar Pestano, Sr. Gaudiosa Suelo, Sr. Estelita Borjal, Sr. Edita Espia, Sr. Amor Dulfo, Sr. Angie Tamayo, Sr. Marcelina Macandog, Sr. Remy Bermejo, Sr. Sol Albao, Sr. Zen Condes, Sr. Rebecca Felizardo, Sr. Georgina Sandico, Sr. Amy Camposano, Sr. RoseLyn Doromal, Sr. Teresita Montanano. All are present. One is not with them, she is in Greece, Sr. Emma Rivero. Three of their companions, Sr. Rebecca Competente, Sr. Lydia Malgapo and Sr. Edita Lacsao have gone ahead of them. Their mission now, in the words of St. Vincent, is "to love God forevermore in heaven." Please give our golden jubilarians a thunderous round of applause!

My dear sister golden jubilarians, 25 years ago I was with you in this same chapel celebrating with you your silver anniversary. While I was hesitant to promise you then that I will be with you again today for your golden because I may not be able to fulfill that promise, this time I will not hesitate at all to promise you that I will be with you again when you celebrate your diamond anniversary. Anyway, we may not be around anymore when that time comes ten years from now.

What a difference 25 years make!

*25 years ago*, our combined weight was 2, 850pounds. Today it is 3, 230 pounds. A net gain of 380 pounds.

*25 years ago*, our combined waistline was 570 inches. Today it is 665. A net profit of 95 inches.

*25 years ago*, we had a complete set of teeth. Today we have a combined loss of 76 teeth.

*25 years ago*, we had a total of 200 meters of lines on our faces. Today we have a total of 2 kilometers of lines. A net gain of 1800 meters.

*25 years ago*, God could count the number of hairs on our head with much difficulty. Now, it is very easy for Him to do so due to a lot of hairfall, there is not much to count anymore.

And, *25 years ago* many of us had hairs that were charcoal black. Now most of us have snow white hairs of whatever is still left on our heads.

We can go on counting our losses and our gains. But there is one thing that I am sure of. Your vital statistics which is: 50-50-50.

50 years of love, 50 years of service, 50 years of community.

And there is another thing that I am most sure of, that when you combine all your assignments, when you put together all your experiences, when you consolidate all your knowledge and skills acquired through these years, and when you merge your wisdom, you would have made this Province of St. Louise in Asia, the best Province in the world of the Little Company. And if you pass all this on to the aspirants and the postulants, the seminary sisters and the undervow sisters you will be ensuring a very bright future for the Province.

I have asked the golden jubilarian sisters to help me prepare for this homily. And they readily and quickly answered me through email. I asked them about their assignments in the past 50 years and their favourite biblical passage. I didn't anymore ask about their age, total obvious na naman yan. If the youngest then entered at 20 years old, plus 50, at least 70 years old na yong youngest. At wala namang pumasok noon na 50 years old na, kasi kung ganoon, 100 years old na siya ngayon.

Anyway, as to their assignments, they have had an average of 12 assignments in the past 50 years in the Philippines and in foreign missions. As to their favourite biblical passages, I will just quote a few lines:

“the lord is my light and my salvation”

“I have called you and you are mine”

“Come to me all you who labor...and I will give you rest”

“Those who do the will of my Father are my mother, brother and sister”

“Faith, hope and love, the greatest of these is love”

“Where your treasure is there will your heart be”

“Here I am Lord, I come to do your will”

“You guard me from the foe and you lead me in ways everlasting”

“My sheep hear my voice”

“We hold a treasure in earthen vessels”

“I will sing forever of your love, O Lord”

“There is only one thing I ask of the Lord, to live in his love forevermore”

What I have gathered from these quotations is that our golden jubilarians, while they have a great love, they acknowledge that this love is only a shadow of God's faithful love. This is suggested by the theme of today's celebration, “celebrating the Eucharist

with profound gratitude for God's faithful love. And I like the refrain of this song: "Yahweh's love will last forever, His faithfulness till the end of time. Yahweh is a loving God. Yahweh the faithful one." This brings me to the oft quoted words of St. Vincent de Paul whenever he was praised for his good works and services: "I am a useless instrument in the hands of God. If not for Him, I would have messed up everything."

Our golden jubilarians look very simple and quiet, there's no air of haughtiness or arrogance in their demeanor, but my goodness, our jubilarians have been faithful, efficient and effective missionaries in Thailand, in Greece, in Taiwan, in Cambodia, in Laos. They are professional nurses, dedicated social workers, learned educators and librarians, wise administrators, charismatic community leaders. And the one best thing that they have in common is this: they are all loving servants of the poor.

As we celebrate with joy and gratitude the golden jubilee of our Sisters, I ask, why gold. What is it in gold that it takes 50 years to get there.

There has never been a time in mankind's history that gold was undervalued. Gold is one of the most desirable of precious metals. It is a sign of wealth and prestige. It is a symbol of purity, value and royalty. Temples were made of or covered with gold, for example, the Dome of the Rock in Jerusalem, the Sikh golden Temple in India, the Buddhist Temple in Thailand, or the Temple built by King Solomon. Crowns of kings and queens are made of gold. Many wedding rings are made of gold.

In the O.T. we have read of the golden calf. In the N.T., gold is one of the gifts of the Magi to Jesus. In the life of St. Vincent we read of an episode where one of his masters during his Turkish captivity was an alchemist who boasted of his ability to turn base metals into gold. The top prize at the Olympic games and many sports competition is a gold medal.

Gold is also used to describe figuratively something that is highly appreciated such as the golden rule, or the golden age of civilization, or the golden years of a highly successful person. To appreciate the value of time we say that time is gold. In Greek mythology we read of the Midas' touch, that whatever the god Midas touched would turn to gold. We apply this to a person who is successful in business.

In the past, gold was used for coins. Today gold is used for investments, jewelry, the arts and industry. The fineness of gold is measured in karats. A 12 karat gold is only 50% gold combined with other metals. Pure gold is 24 karat.

It is here that I like to say that our golden jubilarians are all 24 karat gold. Because of them, this Province has been substantially enriched. There is, too, an aura in the Province of purity, value and royalty. Purity because our golden jubilarians have loved and served the poor with the greatest purity of intention and motivation. Value because their combined worth is priceless. And royalty because they've lived their kingship in the service of the poor.

Where is gold found? In caves, in rivers, in rocks. Our golden jubilarians have found their gold in Jesus who was born in a cave in Bethlehem, in Jesus who was baptized in the river Jordan, in Jesus who found His church on rock, and in Jesus who was buried in a rock hewn tomb.

We are now in the season of Lent. Our readings for today may not be directly about golden anniversaries, but they do speak of gold. We become gold when we try to be holy as our Lord God is holy and to be perfect as God is perfect. We find gold when we forgive and love our enemies. We discover gold when we pray for those who persecute us. We become refined gold when we follow and delight in God's law, when we keep His statutes and His commandments, when we listen to His voice.

**25 years ago you were very busy with preparations for your silver anniversary. But before that you were very busy with preparations for the World Youth Day and the visit of now St. Pope John Paul II. You were practicing the lyrics and the gestures for that immortal song "Tell the World." You may not have memorized the song but certainly you have lived it in your life and in your ministry. You know that "God so loved the world. He gave us His only Son, Jesus Christ, our Savior, His most precious one. He has sent us a message of love and sends those who hear to bring the message to everyone in a voice loud and clear. Let us tell the world of His love, the greatest love the world has known. Search the world for those who have walked astray and lead them home. Fill the world's darkest corners with His light from up above. Walk every step, every road, every mile, and tell the world, tell the world of His love." My dear golden jubilarians, your mission hasn't changed. With all the energy and strength that you still have: Tell the world of His love!**

And finally, the chemical symbol for gold is AU. These are the first two letters in the Latin word AURUM which in English is translated as GOLD. From the Latin word Aurum is another word: AURORA, meaning dawn. The symbolic meaning of gold is a "shining dawn." So, there you have it, my dear Sister golden jubilarians. Your golden jubilee is not a frantic and anxious preparation for a golden sunset. Rather it is the joyful anticipation of the coming of the shining dawn in your lives. CONGRATULATIONS, SISTERS! GOD BLESS YOU and TURN YOUR GOLD INTO DIAMOND!