

Corpus Christi – Jubilee in Cupertino/San Jose – June 14, 2009

What return shall I make to the Lord for all his goodness to me?

The cup of salvation I shall take up and call upon God's name.

My vows to the Lord I will fulfill in the presence of all his people.

These words of Psalm 116, an adaptation of which we sang in the responsorial psalm, are what brings us from east to west, north to south here today: to celebrate and give thanks for men who have fulfilled their vows in the presence of all the people. We do that in the context of the celebration and thanksgiving of the man Jesus, who fulfilled his vow to God, and thereby lived a life unto death that was infinitely pleasing to the Father.

No matter how many years of faithful service the jubilarians' lives represent – actually the number is 380 years for the men here, plus 1500 more counting those celebrating jubilees in the rest of the Marianist Province of the United States, added to a few more thousand years of Marianist jubilarians throughout the world No matter how many years of faithful service these men's lives represent, no matter their accomplishments, their fidelity, does it not seem pretentious to parallel their vowed lives to the all holy mystery of the vow fulfilled by God become flesh in the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus, which we celebrate as a sacrament here at this altar?

But that is exactly the spellbinding grace! What you and I, what these men, do and have done through the years, whether ordinary or extraordinary, whether seen or unseen, whether successful or unsuccessful, whether joyful or sorrowful; what you and I, what these men do or have done in fidelity is a part of the saving work of Christ throughout history that we remember and experience made present in the breaking of the bread and the sharing of the cup.

Sixteen hundred years ago, St. Augustine taught us about this marvelous grace when he commented on the writing of St. Paul in a sermon to the newly baptized.

if you want to understand the body of Christ, listen to the Apostle Paul speaking to the faithful: "You are the body of Christ, member for member." [1 Cor 12.27] If *you*, therefore, are Christ's body and members, it is your own mystery that is placed on the Lord's table! It is your own mystery that you are receiving! You are saying "Amen" to what you are . your response is a personal signature, affirming your faith. ...Be what you see; *receive* what you are.

We are the Body of Christ. For better or for worse we are Christ in this world. As Blessed John XIII said, we are the eighth sacrament and the only one nonbelievers will ever receive. It is our mission, as the famous Cardinal Suhard wrote, to live as Christ in such a way that our lives are a mystery that moves others to say there must be a God.

Notice how Augustine calls the altar the "table of the Lord." In truth, it is more table than altar, more domestic than cultic, more ordinary and accessible than mystifying and distant. Jesus has not left us as a memorial some eerie, fierce, archaic rite but an action as at home around the kitchen table as here in this Church, this house of God's people: the breaking of bread and the pouring of a

cup. Christ has taken a simple gesture that probably you and I do every day and made it a sign of his marvelous presence. Christ has taken simple things, bread and wine, and claimed that they can bear much mystery. He has taken things that are both gift and work. Gift of the seeds, the soil, the rain, the sun and the work of harvesting, blending, crushing, kneading, aging, baking, along with the human ingenuity that saw in the wheat and grapes food and drink for the table.

Simple things that bring together gift and work. So also the men whom we celebrate today – the gift of their lives from God through their parents nurtured by their families and friends and then what they made of that gift of life: all fashioning themselves first into brothers and then as circumstance and the call of obedience directed them into teacher, writer, pastor, healer, director of souls, principal, musician, companion to street people, missionary, choir master, family caregiver, administrator, chaplain – and through all that, through the gift of their lives and their work making present in simple ways the divine.

The bread that we bake and the wine that we age are not always the most perfect, yet still they feed our hunger and quench our thirst. In the same way, the brothers for whom we give thanks, were not, as I am sure they would be the first to tell us, always perfect. And that's more the mystery, for St. Paul tells us, that with God, when we are weak we are strong [2 Corinthians 12:10], for God chooses the foolish and the weak, as He chose the weak, mangled body of Jesus to be the Risen, wound-marked glorious Christ.

But whether weak or strong, perfect or imperfect they showed up for 50, 60 years – they were faithful for more than half a century, something truly remarkable, mysterious in this day and age. And if you were to ask them why, in their best moments, which are most of their moments, in one way or another they would tell you what they will declare in a few minutes. I showed up, they would say,

For the glory of the Most Holy Trinity,

For the honor of Mary,

And to follow Christ more closely in his saving mission....

Or if you want it in short hand, they might borrow a phrase from an ever popular musical and say these 50, 60 years are “what I did for love....” Isn't that what everything is all about, because that's who God is, Love? Isn't it the case that the wonder we call creation – that something exists rather than nothing; that there are sights and sounds, sky and ocean and a limitless multitude of living creatures rather than emptiness and void – isn't it the case that the wonder we call creation exists because beyond the bounds of what we can see and hear, think or will is an Infinite Goodness, whom we name God, whose very nature, very Being, is to pour out goodness beyond himself without end.

When someone spreads goodness around, that's love. When sons and daughters do good acts – like bring gifts, make life easier, perform some chore, initiate an embrace – for their fathers today or whenever, that's love. When Jorge, John, Frank, Paco, Ted, Ray, Skip spread good around

indiscriminately like a father or brother or counselor or trainer or coach or friend, that was love like God's, whose sun shines and whose rain falls on all no matter what. They showed up these many years to let goodness overflow like God did in creation, like Mary did in the birth of Jesus, begotten of the Father's love, whom the whole world could not contain.

Aristotle once said that doing good makes one happy; it's not the wishing for it. It also makes others happy. And I think the jubilarians will tell you that they are happy for the good they have done, for the good of these years that they can celebrate with you. But at the end of this day they might snatch still other lyrics from *A Chorus Line* and say: "'Kiss today good-bye, the sweetness and the sorrow,' of this celebration of all these years, and 'point me to tomorrow.'" It doesn't end here. It may not be exactly like yesterday, 20 or 50 or 60 years ago, but the journey never ends until it reaches forever. For as long as they have breath, they have good to spread, for Blessed Chaminade has told them and all of us associated with the Marianist spirit that we are always and everywhere on Mission, Missionaries of Mary, making Christ present as she did. We are always and everywhere, the Body of Christ, the eighth sacrament, the mystery that provokes unbelievers to question their unbelief – the mystery of what we now celebrate at this Table.