

Jubilee Homily 2016
Hermitage Ste. Croix
Wednesday, August 10

Dear Brothers (and sisters):

For a long time I really did not grasp the significance of this teaching of Jesus that: “those who love their life lose it, and those who hate their life in this world will keep it for eternal life.” Then one day when I was speaking to a young mother who was a parishioner, I happened to comment that she looked very tired. She then told me how her evening job ran very late the night before, and how she was looking forward to a good night’s sleep, when one of her children became ill during the night. She sat up, tending to her child for most of the night. The same child was often sick, and she and her husband frequently went without sufficient sleep while tending to their child.

This couple is representative of the people we have all encountered who put aside their own agenda and their own preferences, or deprive themselves of their own needs without giving it a second thought. They do this out of sheer love and devotion for others and expect no recognition. These are the people who, like the grain of wheat, die to themselves and in the process they yield a rich harvest of virtue and goodness and love. These are the people who, as Jesus put it “hate their life”, not in the sense that they find no joy in life; but in the sense that they do not selfishly cling to their own likes and dislikes, and their own agenda. These people really find life and live it fully. They reflect the eternal outpouring of the love of the Trinity.

If we stop to think of it, we are surrounded by examples of people who die to themselves, like the grain of wheat dies, only to give life. Sometimes these examples are so close to us, that we miss them because of the all too familiar mix of human dysfunction and divinely

inspired goodness. We might take a moment to look at some of the people whom we honour today at this jubilee celebration.

Rein Van Leeuwen celebrates 60 years of ministry as a priest. He left the familiar setting of his life in Holland and went to Indonesia where he made a significant contribution to the Indonesian church as the communications director for the Bishops' conference of Indonesia. In our youth the thought of going to another country carries with it a certain amount of adventure, but it takes much more than adventure to deal with the challenges of day to day living. Faith had to carry Rein through the years of service; faith and love. I remember that Bishop Hayes, who just died last week, used to say: without love, the tasks we face from day to day would be pure drudgery. Loving what we do and loving the people the gracious God whom we serve makes all the difference.

Bill Marreeve celebrates 60 years of religious profession. From the first weeks Bill arrived from Holland as a scholastic, his passion for liturgy was obvious. He lived and breathed every building block of the liturgical renewal of the second Vatican Council. He followed with excitement and shared with us the flow of information that came from the council as it progressed from session to session. He was very much into the creative flow of the theology that was emerging in those days, and profoundly committed to living and proclaiming it. All of that meant reforming his life; letting go of and dying to the vision of church that preceded this pastoral blossoming of the second Vatican council.

Claude Bedard who celebrates 50 years of ordination grew in his commitment to the community's mission during his time in the Congo. That commitment to Africa grew more passionate through the years and is still very much present. Claude is a visionary, the one who shapes ideas and dreams, a very important role within any community and in the church. What motivates him to keep moving after a stroke, cancer

treatment and a more recent bout with respiratory issues? I believe it is faith which brought him to accept the life he has been given with its moments of both darkness and light. Also, Claude has the ability to step back and see the humour in a lot of situations.

Then, there is Giovanni, who celebrates 25 years of ordination. Giovanni took a real risk coming here in his early fifties to a new country and culture, and undertaking the task of learning English from scratch. Giovanni gave up a lot to come and find a place for himself in our international community. For example, Giovanni had a television program consisting of interviews, religious themes and prayer time. He was well established in Brazil. He responded to the call for help and let go of the familiar, to risk a new life here.

These are all examples of death and life right here among us; we do not have to look far.

For myself, at this time in my life, I look at the past 50 years with gratitude, especially for the great number of people who showed me God's love and forgiveness, and God's life-giving, nurturing presence.

I am grateful to be living at this time when so much transformation is occurring all around us. To name but a few examples, there is the migration of peoples. As people migrate all over the globe, (a few by choice, too many by force due to violence) it is hopeful to see nationalism disappearing, even slowly and at times painfully, and the intermingling of cultures. It is no longer Germany for the Germans, and France for the French, the world is becoming more like the proverbial global village.

I am grateful to see Argentina and Latin America generally becoming a source church, replacing Europe which has been Catholicism's source church for so many years. I am particularly grateful for Pope Francis who is a gift to us with his vision of church, a vision which Benedict went out

of his way to protect as he insisted that the Vatican bureaucracy allow the conference of bishops of Latin America to develop without interference.

I am grateful to be living in a time when science has become a handmaid of theology, pushing philosophy aside for room. Inspired by Pierre Teilhard de Chardin there is a creative group of scientist-theologians whose work give us fresh insights into the mysteries of our faith.

For these and for so much more we give thanks and praise to God this day, praying that the good we jubilarians have done may be more of a legacy than the errors we have made. Amen.

Jim Casper SCJ
August 10 2016