

Thanks: Diamond Jubilee Mass

13 January, 2019

On behalf of the Diamond Jubilarians, I thank everyone here for joining us in this celebration of thanksgiving. Of course, it is appropriate that we have begun with the Eucharist – a word that itself means “Thanksgiving”.

When preparing this Eucharist, our group recalled other significant anniversaries that coincide with our jubilee:

The year 2020 marks 160 years since Mary MacKillop first met Father Julian Woods when she joined her Cameron relatives in Penola.

It is 150 years since Mary and the Sisters began ministry in Brisbane after their arrival there on New Year’s Eve 1869.

140 years ago, the New South Wales Education Act stopped providing State Aid to non-government schools, precipitating Church authorities’ engagement of Sisters of St Joseph in far-flung communities in this State.

And 2020 also marks 130 years since Josephites established their mission in Victoria and among the Maori people in Matata, New Zealand.

All these events were part of the foundations that make up the Josephite story that became our story 60 years ago. So today we thank God for all the Sisters of Saint Joseph who laid those foundations and enabled us to play our part in God’s mission given to our world through the Josephite spirit.

That we could find our home among the Sisters of St Joseph was only possible, of course, because of the foundation of our families, first of all, and the friendship of so many who have encouraged and supported us on our life journey. Your presence here represents all those who have been and continue to be vital to our lives. We thank God for all of you. Because of you, we have been able to recognise, as the image on our Mass booklet illustrates, that out of these foundations issues the fire of love. Love builds dreams. And there we touch into the dream of God for us:

To be of one mind and heart with Jesus Christ gives meaning to our lives. We are rooted in him joined with him as closely as the branches are to the vine.

So the fire of love that is fed by Jesus reaches out to others, and leads us to a new place. In this era of ageism, society would have Diamond Jubilarians pack up and withdraw into the shadows. But love’s fire doesn’t recede with age—we can love just as strongly in a wheel chair as we can in running shoes! Love’s warmth becomes more powerful as we continue the journey towards whatever new place awaits us. So today we have given praise to God for that fire—it is Spirit-given. We thank all those who have enabled this act of praise to happen:

You, Sr Monica Cavanagh and our leadership team who have provided us with the opportunity to come together;

We thank you, Bishop Pat, for your words, and, with our priest-friends, in leading us in the celebration;

Our musicians, Srs Vena Skinner and Jeanette Foxe, and Sr Susan Connelly who conducted the lead singers. You encouraged us to sing with full voice, and we thank you all.

So many things happen behind the scenes—the preparation of flowers and of the sanctuary, the printing of booklets, the organisation of ceremonies—thank you to all involved. Even now there are people setting up for the refreshments following this Mass—to them and to all of you we are grateful for your selfless giving and generosity.

What better way to sum up these thanks than to take up the words St Paul gave us in today’s reading:

‘Glory be to God, whose power working in us can do infinitely more than we can ask or imagine—to God be glory forever and ever’.

Mary Cresp rsj

