

Homily by Dn. David Nagel, SCJ
US Province Jubilee Celebration
August 16, 2022

As a person who works with numbers, I like to add up the years of service given by all those celebrating jubilees today. With just the four celebrating 50 years that is 200 years of service! Today we can celebrate those who have heard the call of the Lord.

When young Samuel was minister to the Lord, the word of the Lord was scarce and vision infrequent . . . doesn't that describe our world today! But the Lord called to Samuel who said in response; "Here I am". He stood open to the Lord and ready to do the Lord's will.

We also recall Mary, the Mother of Jesus, who was greeted by the angel and told she was going to be the mother of the savior and she said yes. She gave her "fiat" of total agreement to the Lord.

In our Dehonian spirituality she witnessed to the call of the Lord with her Ecce Ancilla, behold I come to do your will, Lord. Each of us celebrating our anniversaries can remember the Lord calling us to serve his church.

The circumstances were different than they were for Samuel and Mary. We probably were not sleeping in the Temple when God called but maybe we were sleeping in church and still heard the call of the Lord. No matter how it happened the Lord sought us and called us to be in his service.

The second reading from St Paul talks about the gifts of the Spirit. There are many spiritual gifts given by the Holy Spirit and each of us shares uniquely in these gifts. God is not one size fits all with his gifts but tailors his gifts to our talents, abilities, and needs. When I look at this group of jubilarians I can see a large variety of gifts!

That is what we celebrate today with the anniversaries of each of these religious. Each of us called to give ourselves in service to the Lord and the church. And each of us in different forms of service but each one completing the whole church of Christ.

Yes, it is God who produces good deeds in each of us. In what I know of each religious here today they have manifested the Spirit in being who they are. I may not be a good teacher, but another religious is an excellent teacher. I may fall short in some ways, but the Lord makes up our frailties in the strengths of others. In religious life we are challenged to use our best gifts to serve the church.

The Spirit is manifested in us so that we might witness to the many gifts of the Spirit: some are given wisdom; others knowledge; one has a strong faith; another a gift for healing of mind and soul; others do great deeds in witness to the Spirit; another is able to witness to the future; and some have an ability to speak to people of different backgrounds and cultures in a way they understand.

But always it is the one and same Spirit who produces all these gifts and distributes them to individuals, like us, as the Spirit wishes. Here we see the Spirit at work in these religious who today celebrate hearing the call of the Spirit and responded by putting to use the gifts given to them.

The open heart of Jesus is the source of Holy Spirit who gives us a share in the love of God and makes us one with the Father. We in turn open our hearts to receive love, to hear God's word, and to use our gifts to build the Kingdom and establish the reign of God's love in people and societies.

Religious life is a different call from the ordinary as stated in the Gospel. Imagine a newspaper ad for a church which reads, "Come deny yourself together with us." It would seem crazy for a church or religious community to advertise itself like this.

But Jesus spoke this way about following him when he said, "if anyone would come after me, let him deny himself and take up his cross and follow me". As religious we follow Jesus by professing the three vows of poverty, chastity, and obedience.

As we consider our Lord's truth in advertising what then does it mean to deny yourself? It does not mean that we cannot enjoy ourselves. Jesus himself enjoyed food and drink at feasts and was wrongly criticized for doing so. Nor does self-denial mean following after a long list of manmade rules with do's and don'ts. Nor does it mean that if there is one thing, we really desire than it will be the one thing that God wants us to give up.

On the contrary, Jesus wants to give us our heart's' desires. Living religious life is partaking in the life of Jesus. It is the fulfillment of our baptismal call. It is listening to the word of the Lord, accepting the call by using our unique gifts given by the Holy Spirit in the service of the God and his people, and unites us with Jesus in his love for the Father and for people.

Yes, listen to the call of God as Samuel did. Open your hearts to receive the gifts of the Spirit so you might use them in service to the church and people. Let us lose our lives in Christ so we might live with him always.

As Fr. Dehon lived his life in witness to love . . . so may the Heart of Jesus live through us and in us! Vivat Cor Jesu . . .

