

Saturday, July 26, 2025-Jubilee Liturgy
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Today we are celebrating Jubilee—marking 50, 60, 70, 75 and even 80 years since our reception into the IHM community. The word Jubilee is deeply religious. The more common word is “anniversary,” but Jubilee carries extra weight: it speaks of liberation, restoration and renewal. In biblical tradition, every 25 years, during a jubilee, debts were forgiven, land was returned and freedom was restored. These practices were intended to prevent the formation of permanent classes of the rich and the poor, the powerful and the powerless.

What does Jubilee mean today? Pope Francis has declared this year as a *Jubilee Year of Hope*. And our own jubilarians chose “Hope for the future and Gratitude for the past” as their theme. Choosing hope is not unlike choosing prayer: the results may not be and are seldom immediate or visible. It takes persistence. (My family called it cussed stubbornness.) Hope also calls us to act—to co-create a future of justice and peace. It might look like marching for justice, supporting our sisters at the border, caring tenderly for one another here at the Motherhouse, writing letters to our legislators, working for peace in Gaza, Ukraine, South Sudan, Haiti and so many other places. These actions, rooted in hope, become forms of prayer.

Milestones, such as jubilees, invite us to pause and remember our original call and the many moments that have followed. Each of us carries a unique experience of our call, but I would venture to say that for all of us, it included something about our relationship with God and the IHM community. The moments since, the ups and downs, recall God-with-us through it all, our persistent God. *And that, of course, is about prayer.*

Fittingly, today’s Gospel begins with Jesus praying. *He was praying in a certain place* (Luke 11:1). The disciples were there. And there was something about how Jesus prayed that deeply moved the disciples, so much so that they asked, “*Lord, teach us to pray.*”

I imagine many of us have had a similar experience: observing someone in prayer and being drawn in, touched by their intimacy with God. Their very presence seemed to make God more present to us. For me, one of those people was Bishop Tom Gumbleton. Whether he was sitting quietly before Mass or a talk or celebrating liturgy, his way of being in prayer revealed God to me. *By the way, this is Irene Therese’s first jubilee without Tom celebrating alongside us.*

I suspect you, too, can name the people whose prayerful lives have touched and shaped your own. People who, through their example, made you more present to God, helped you learn how to pray—not just with words, but with a life.

When the disciples asked Jesus how to pray, he offered the *Our Father/Mother*—a prayer that centers us in God the Holy One, in God’s will, in God’s daily provision and in

right relationship. (Though I confess, I've often wished that provision was for more than just *today's* bread. A few days in the spiritual pantry would be nice, wouldn't it?)

Jesus then contrasts the reluctant friend who tells you to come back tomorrow for bread with God's immediate generosity. Generosity that's way ahead of us, even knowing our need. He encourages us to ask, to seek, to knock—and above all, to persist. After 50, 60, 70, 75, or 80 years of prayer and service, I'd say we have some experience of persistence!

Jesus leads us to reimagine God—not as reluctant or withholding-but as one who gives freely, who is compassionate and merciful, loving. Our first reading offers a more intimate portrait of that relationship. Abraham, in conversation with God, negotiates boldly, repeatedly, lovingly, and with complete confidence in God's response. He haggles not once, not twice, but six times! And God listens and responds. There's something tender, even humorous, in this exchange. It reminds us that prayer is not about lofty language — it's about relationship, honesty, trust and love.

I believe the invitation to us today is to be like those whose example has revealed God to us and in so doing, to make our loving God more present in our world.

Thank you for your witness, your prayer, your persistence and your hope.

Happy Jubilee!