



Archdiocese of San Antonio
Most Reverend Gustavo Garcia-Siller



**Homily – Jubilee Mass for the Sisters of the
Incarnate Word
October 9, 2015**

Tonight we celebrate the many blessings that have come from the lives of faith and service of our Jubilarians. Each of you are living witnesses that with God's Grace, the heart and soul remain young when we say "Yes" to God's calling in the spirit of trust and obedience. I thank each of you for making our Church more vibrant, our community more complete, and for the people of God who are truly blessed by the faithful joy that comes from your ministries. Through God's call and His many gifts, you have contributed to a great legacy of the Sisters of Charity of the Incarnate Word.

In the Psalm we hear the bold witness of faith and trust: "The Lord is my light and my salvation, whom shall I fear?" It is that spirit of trust that strengthens us in our vocations of missionary discipleship. This trust in God's presence does not mean everything is going to come without challenges and even disappointments. No, it means that God

is always there to catch us when we fall, wipe away our tears when we are disappointed, and embrace us as we mourn opportunities missed. We trust that the Lord, "The light of the World", will protect us from those who would seek to hide the "Face of the Lord" and the truth that emanates from his Incarnate Word.

During his visit to the United States, Pope Francis addressed clergy and men and women of consecrated life. He told them the story of St. Katharine Drexel. When she spoke to Pope Leo XIII about the needs of the mission, Pope Leo turned the tables on her and challenged her with this question, "What about you? What are you going to do?" This direct, but important question is always asked of each of us by the Lord, to both invite and challenge us to continue to carry the Joy of the Gospel to everyone we are sent to serve.

Pope Francis thanked all religious and clergy for their obedient response to Jesus' challenge, "What about you?" He said: "I thank you for the way in which each of you has answered Jesus' question which inspired your own vocation. I encourage you to be renewed in the joy and wonder of that first encounter with Jesus, and to draw from that renewed fidelity and strength." No matter how old we are, no matter how long we have served in the fields of faith, God's Grace is never depleted as long as we continue to trust in Him, reaching out to those we serve so they can encounter Christ in some transforming

way. Again, the Psalmist tells us that we need not fear, for the Lord is our light, our strength, and our salvation. We may never see the results of our work, but we should always trust that He is at work wherever we have planted the seeds of faith with love, mercy and compassion.

In the Gospel, Jesus proclaims to the Jews, and to all of us, that He indeed is the Word of God Incarnate. He proclaimed in the synagogue the words of the prophet Isaiah: "The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he has anointed me to bring glad tidings to the poor...liberty to the captives...recovery of sight to the blind...and let the oppressed go free." Jesus is inviting us all to encounter and see the human face of the suffering, the isolated, and those who are marginalized by the indignity of injustice. Each of you have, through your vocation, collaborated with Him in bringing the Joy of the Gospel and the saving power of Jesus Christ to the countless children of God you have served.

Tonight, each of us should take the time to reflect back on our life of ministry. Not to count successes and failures, but to discover God working through us in the lives of others. When we see His power and Grace animating our sometimes humble efforts, inspiring us when we listen to the guidance of His Spirit, I believe we will be encouraged to never stop ministering to God's people. Sometimes you may feel

that you do not have the physical strength to do those things you once could do. You may ask yourself, and God, "How can I help the poor, free the oppressed, feed the hungry, and do all that remains to be done to make God's Kingdom present in the lives who yearn for His peace." I ask you to consider the words of Blessed Mother Teresa of Calcutta, as she looked back on her life of service: "If our work were just to wash and feed and give medicines to the sick, the center would have closed a long time ago. The most important thing in our centers is the opportunity we are offered to reach souls." As long as you can place your trust in the Lord; as long as you can share the joy and hope of the Gospel with your presence among us; and as long as you trust in the power of God in your every prayer, you are bringing God's Grace into the world in leading others to an encounter with God and making his Word come to life in ways you may have never imagined. Again, Pope Francis spoke about the lifetime of work that has been shared by so many in consecrated life: "The true worth of our apostolate is measured by the value it has in God's eyes...It calls for great humility. The cross shows us a different way of measuring success. Ours is to plant the seeds: God sees to the fruits of our labors."

With gratitude and affection, I ask God to continue to bless all the members of Sisters of Charity of the Incarnate Word, past and

present, for all you have done to build God's Kingdom. May our brothers and sisters who walk in God's light, because you have passed by, never allowing your faith and trust in God to be extinguished, as you proclaim, "The Lord is my light and salvation. Whom shall I fear?"