



Reflections on my Golden Jubilee — Sr. Ann Kelly FMDM

This year of my Golden Jubilee is one of great joy and happiness for me. In 1967 when I made my First Profession as a Franciscan Missionary of the Divine Motherhood it was followed by a half year of spiritual studies and then midwifery training, since I was already a nurse. In July 1969 just as the first men set foot on the moon, I arrived in Zambia. Since then I worked mostly in rural mission hospitals, followed by 14 years in the formation of our young African sisters.

For the last 11 years I have been training lay prayer companions to accompany parishioners through 7 days "Individually Guided Retreats".

I have loved all these ministries but I think God kept the best wine for the end. I am so energized and inspired by witnessing God's action in both the prayer companions and the retreatants, as I see lives change and blossom when people are deeply touched by God's love and enter into a personal loving relationship with Christ.

As I reflect on what these 50 years have meant to me I have a deep and profound awareness of God's unconditional love, how he has truly carried me through all the storms, pains, struggles, disappointments, and heartbreaks that are part of life. He has always been there lifting me up, rekindling and renewing me over and over again with the fire of his love.

A friend who was present at our Jubilee Mass wrote afterwards, *"I was very touched by yourself and Jean - like 2 radiant brides! I saw 2 happy and fulfilled women religious and this was a joy to behold. I am sure many people were touched. Continue to share Life with many."* This rang true and meant a lot to me.

I feel so blessed and grateful to have had such a happy and fulfilled life. I am only sad that today there are so few young people who are ready to answer God's call to follow him. They do not know what a wonderful life they are missing. Our charism of conceiving, birthing and nurturing Christ is so beautiful and essentially life giving.

The response I made after renewing my vows during Mass was, "What I have desired I now hold, what I have longed for I now possess, I am united in heaven with He whom I have loved on earth with all my heart."

I thank God for all the people who have helped and supported me in my life's journey without whom I would not be celebrating my Golden Jubilee year.

May God bless and protect all of them.

Ann Kelly