

JUBILEE MEMORIAL SERVICE Readings:

Eccles. 3:1-8 There is a time for everything, for every purpose under heaven.

Phil 1:1-5 I give thanks to my God every time I think of you

John 14:1-4 In my Father's house there are many dwelling places

There is a time ...

At this time of Jubilee, it is our time ...

to remember and give thanks

to name and to honor

to mourn and to rejoice

in the lives, the learnings, the legacy that is our **most** treasured Jubilee gift.

We thirteen “golden girls” are standing on the shoulders of our parents, sisters and brothers, our beloved sister Gerry, dear friends, and countless others without whose influence and love we would not be celebrating these 50 years of Sparkill Dominican life.

We give thanks for all of them, as Paul wrote to the Philippians in today's reading, and for the way **they** proclaimed the gospel of Jesus, not from a pulpit, but through their daily lives.

This is our time to reflect on their gifts to us ... **Together** we have reflected, and identified many of these gifts, which I want to share with you.

First, The gift of faith ... a faith deeper than any church institution, a faith enduring through times of sickness and recovery, times of death and birth, times of weeping and laughing, of mourning and dancing.

The gift of generous lives, of a work ethic, which has been an example for us in our ministries.

The gift of their appreciation for the uniqueness of each one of us and of every other person.

The gift of acceptance, teaching us to be happy with who we are and what we have, while still reaching beyond what we could hope for or imagine.

And now, *Gerry*, a gift to our band for 29 years—until her sudden death when she was only 60. As one of us said, “Gerry was omnipresent; when she entered a space, she lit up the room.” We cherish our memories of her humor and her smile, her energetic and magnanimous spirit. Even heaven must have lit up more brightly when Gerry arrived. Her zest for life is now our legacy.

In a book titled “In the Sanctuary of Women,” Jan Richardson has written many blessings.

One seemed intended for our Memorial Service today.....

Let us lament
what has been lost.
Let us grieve
in the gaps
and reach into the absence
and hold the emptiness
with both hands...

Yet let us also make
an offering of gratitude
for those whose work
made a way for us.
And then let us take up
the work that is ours.
And let us move
with the grace
of the generations
gone before us
whom we will never know
but whose stories still sing
within our making.

In preparing these reflections, I was sitting in my Grandmother Peggy’s rocker, her energy entering me through that chair. I was looking through some of those holy cards that we keep from the funerals of our loved ones, and I noticed that the inscription on Gerry’s card and both my parents’ cards was the same, the Prayer of St. Francis: “Make me an instrument of your peace; where there is doubt, let me bring faith; where there is despair, hope; where there is sadness, joy.”

And so there is a time ... a time now to gather, gather around this table in communion with those we love and who loved us, and with all the communion of saints, to eat the bread that nourished them and continues to nourish us, so that one day, on our holy cards, we, too may be remembered as God’s instruments of love, of hope, and especially of peace.

Sr. Mary Jo Heman – October 7, 2011 – Golden Jubilee Memorial Service