



26<sup>th</sup> World Day for Consecrated Life  
2 February 2022

## Jubilee Letter – 2022

### “Belovedness”

*The love of God has been poured into our hearts...* (Rm 5:5)

**Dear Sister Jubilarians of 2022,**

With a heart filled with joy and love, I pray for and congratulate each of you on the anniversary of your first profession of vows, some 25, 40, 50, 60, 70, 75, and 80 years ago. This year, I too celebrate a jubilee with you, and it becomes a time for us to experience anew God’s ever faithful, intimate love.

This *love of God has been poured into our hearts*, and our lives of fidelity witness to this love. In truth, we celebrate “belovedness”—that we are God’s beloved, chosen to live this love, and sent to make this love visible and alive in our world.

Such witness is a profound source of hope and encouragement, the ‘gospel’ so needed in the world today, especially as we continue to live through dark and uncertain times. For this witness we thank you, and we thank our God for how God has loved us and has loved through us, through each School Sister of Notre Dame.

During this jubilee year, I encourage each of us to reflect on how we have experienced the mystery of belovedness in our lives and how it has evolved and shaped our life in mission. With what love have we been loved? What love have we been called to live and make real in our world today?

### Urgency of Love

*Love urges us to unite our will with God’s.* (YAS, C 19)

Our Creator God, Source of all being, loved us and all creation into being. God’s desire for each of us, for each person, is to know that we are loved and to own our belovedness. There seems to be an urgency for God in this, an urgency of love. From John 3:16 we know that God so loved the world that God gave the only Son.

Recently, we concluded the celebration of Christmas, a time to contemplate the profound mystery of the Incarnation that continues to unfold in the heart of the history of all creation and humanity, in our sacred history. God desired so much to be with us that God chose to become one of us, that we could know God, God’s love, and our belovedness.

We begin to grasp the meaning of this a bit more when Jesus’ belovedness is confirmed at his baptism with the voice from heaven: “You are my beloved...” (Lk 3:22). As he owns his

belovedness, an urgency of love takes hold. After a time of desert discernment, he goes forth to teach, to heal, to proclaim God's reign, and to empower others for this mission.

The grace of belovedness is not only for Jesus. "From the moment of our baptism we are open in a new way to the initiative of God in our lives. We are incorporated into the life of Christ..." (YAS, C 2) and share the gift of belovedness and the call it holds. "Because God first loved us, we respond in love" (YAS, C 10) and are empowered for mission, for love.

What happens when we experience God loving us, naming us beloved, entering and taking hold of our lives? Our Blessed M. Theresa shared of her powerful experience as a young woman of being loved and of the urgency of love taking hold and impelling her to follow Christ radically. "I write this now in Jesus who has shown me indescribable mercy... I cannot describe my interior peace. Now I am in Jesus! Jesus may do with me what he wants; I trust in him. ...Yes, love cannot wait" (MT, 1).

Love cannot wait. As God's beloved, we are impelled to discipleship for God's mission. Our vocation is to know that we are God's beloved and to reveal the belovedness of one another, loving others in the ways we experience being loved by God. In this, there is urgency.

#### ▲ How do I as God's beloved experience the urgency of love?

### Radicality of Love

*As our intimate relationship with him deepens, he frees us to love more radically.* (YAS, C 13)

"Caught up in Christ's unconditional love, we joyfully commit the totality of our person to him" (YAS, C 13). What can be more radical than to give the whole of ourselves in love? Called and consecrated by God for a radical following of Christ (cf. YAS, C 48), we commit to grow into love, become more like Christ, and accept the costliness and radicality of love.

We claim, "Strengthened by Christ's grace and following his example, we are willing to suffer want, insult, oppression, and death for the sake of the kingdom" (YAS, C 17). With Christ we learn to see with God's eyes and heart, feel the heartache at the suffering and pain around us, weep with those who grieve, grapple with injustices that burden, heal wounds, live the Gospel boldly and prophetically, and embrace vulnerability. Vulnerability brings us to realize that we are beloved of God and invited to share in the vulnerability of God—in divine empathy.

In her early reflection, our Blessed M. Theresa also speaks of this radicality of love. She wrote, "Who made the saints so strong except love? Who taught them so much self-denial except love? ...Who helped them to renounce themselves except love? ...Love surrendered itself to the bitterest death of the cross..." (MT, 1).

We are called, in fact urged "to lay down our lives that others may live" and "that deeper communion among ourselves and all humanity be realized" (YAS, Foreword, C 34). We learn from Christ that our divine vocation is one of radical love, of kenosis—of emptying ourselves in a reciprocity that is interpersonal and intercultural, universal and cosmic. A radical love is ever more open to ultimate surrender and impels us towards universal communion.

#### ▲ What radicality of love am I called to embrace and live?

## Fullness of Love

*Trusting that God always calls us to fullness of being... (YAS, GD 124)*

Learning and becoming more like Christ and growing and maturing in love, we encounter the paradox of love. Christ teaches that there is no greater love than to lay down one's life for one's friends (cf. Jn 15:13). Giving everything, laying down one's life, loving to the end reveals that love is stronger than death.

Embracing and living the radicality of love, we discover ever greater newness and fullness of love, fullness of being. Urgent and radical love journeys beyond death to a larger love, to infinite life. Loving through suffering and death releases energy for greater life and communion—fullness of love, fullness of God.

St. Paul express this beautifully in his prayer...

*...that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith; that you, rooted and grounded in love, may have strength to comprehend with all the holy ones what is the breadth, length, height, and depth; and to know the love of Christ that surpasses knowledge, so that you may be filled with all the fullness of God. (Eph 3:17-19)*

Growing into the fullness of love, we begin to experience the fullness of God, God as Trinity, which St. Bonaventure called a “fountain fullness” of love, and to share in the intimate relationship of the Trinity, a community of love. Heidi Russell speaks of Trinity as Source of Love, Word of Love, and Spirit of Love. The Triune God is the Source of Love, revealed in the Word of Love, enacted in the Spirit of Love, present and forming community and communion (cf. Heidi Russell, “Trinity as Source, Word, and Spirit of Love: Relationship as Core of Reality,” LCWR National Assembly, August 9, 2018).

The invitation today is to trust the energy of love at the heart of life, to own our belovedness, to let ourselves be seized by love, and to create ways for love to evolve into fullness, into a universal communion of love. To the extent that we love and go out from ourselves to live in communion we “make our own that trinitarian dynamism which God imprinted” in us (cf. *Laudato Si'*, 240). May we welcome the grace of belovedness; “deepen our consciousness of who we are in relationship with the Triune God, one another, and God’s amazing universe;” and live into the fullness of love that God desires for us.

### ▲ **How am I being invited to live into fullness of love?**

Dear Sister Jubilarians, let us celebrate and live the grace of belovedness. Throughout this jubilee year, let us praise and thank God for the gift of our vocation and rejoice in being loved. God loves us and sends us forth to witness to Love, to be love.

As beloved of God, Infinite Love, who gives us everything, let us choose to live boldly the evolving of love in our lives—the urgency, radicality, and fullness of love.

United in God’s love,

*Sister Roxanne Schares*

Sister Roxanne Schares, SSND

General Superior