

Archbishop Lori's Homily: Golden Jubilee of the Religious Consecration of Sister Lawrence Mary of Jesus, ISP

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St. Martin's Home, Catonsville, Maryland
April 27, 2018

We've gathered as a family of faith to celebrate in this Eucharistic Liturgy the Golden Jubilee of the Religious Consecration of Sr. Lawrence Mary of Jesus, better known to us all as "Sister Lawrence". Sister Lawrence, thank you for inviting me to offer this Holy Mass and thank you for answering the call to consecrated life and for living this beautiful vocation for these past five decades. Your fellow sisters, your blood sister, Sister Susan who is here from the Motherhouse, your brother and cousin from Michigan, the Little Sisters of the Poor here at St. Martin's and beyond, my brother priests, your former teacher from nursing school, members of your family and your friends, benefactors of the Little Sisters, and most importantly, the residents here at St. Martin's Home: All of us join you in this moment of joy and thanksgiving. It is also a moment in which you rededicate yourself to the way of life and love you embraced so many years ago when you entered the Little Sisters of the Poor.

Anyone who freely accepts a call from the Lord can expect to be surprised. This is surely true of married couples who vow to love and cherish one another come what may for the rest of their lives. After a mere 41 years, I can attest that this is also true in the priesthood but it is also true of consecrated life, as your itinerary, Sister Lawrence, attests. The old saying goes, "Join the Navy and see the world". I think you've joined the Little Sisters and have seen the world! Your loving service to the poor, the sick, and the elderly has taken you far from your native state of Michigan... it's taken you to Scranton, France, Malaysia, South Korea, the Philippines, the

Motherhouse at La Tour, and happily for all of us, to Baltimore. The places where you have served are vastly different; your love and dedication in the spirit of St. Jeanne Jugan has remained the same.

It is the spirit of St. Jeanne Jugan that has animated your labors and those of your fellow sisters in so many places over five decades. With a radical trust in God's providence, St. Jeanne Jugan turned down marriage proposals and instead, as today's reading from the prophet Hosea suggests, she was betrothed to none other than the living God. And in falling in love with the Lord, she also fell in love with the poor, the sick, and the elderly - and was drawn by the Lord to consecrate her life to serving them, knowing that if she did what God asked of her, he would provide for her. As young Jeanne Jugan responded to God's call, he endowed her in the Holy Spirit with a special gift, a charism, that lives on in the religious congregation she founded in 1839, namely, the Little Sisters of the Poor.

Truth to tell, Sister Lawrence, I don't know how many suitors you turned down before you entered religious life, but I do know that, like St. Jeanne Jugan, you experienced God's love and responded to him in love, entrusting your whole life to him and to the vocation which he mapped out for you long before you were born. As you go about your daily work with unflagging energy, you manifest a down-to-earth joy that says to all of us that you have found that love which is greater than every other love, namely, the love by which God gave us his Son who laid down his life for us. We see in you the trust that filled St. Jeanne Jugan's heart, trust that the Lord will provide whatever is needed to do his work. In your joy we glimpse the richness of God's grace which he lavishes upon us all as members of the Body of Christ. In your life of consecration and service, Sister Lawrence, we celebrate the 'spiritual blessing' which God Father, in Jesus, bestowed upon the saintly founder of the Little Sisters.

It's one thing, of course, to answer a call but quite another thing to live that calling day in and day out. Isn't this what the Lord is telling us in today's Gospel? Through your Baptism, through the Mass, and the Sacrament of Reconciliation, through your special consecration to the Lord and your communal life of prayer and service, you are connected to the Lord as branches are connected to the vine. And like St. Jeanne Jugan who remained unwavering in her love of Jesus no matter the challenges and

hardships she endured, so too you have remained in the Lord and in his love in the midst of daily challenges.

In a day and age when longevity in commitment is in short supply, you exemplify what it means to remain steadfast in the Lord's love. As a result your life has born much good fruit as you see Christ in those you serve and love them as you would Christ himself. You've touched countless people the world over and in the process earned for yourself treasure in heaven.

And what a blessing the Little Sisters of the Poor are for the Church and for those of us who are their friends! Dear sisters, I hope you know how beloved you are – here in Baltimore to be sure and wherever you may be. All of you lead the same kind of life – you wear the same habit, follow the same schedule, dedicate your lives to the same kind of work. And all of you exhibit a loving trust in God's Providence and in your patron, the good St. Joseph.

Yet, even though you lead the same life, each of you is unique, and you bring to your way of life gifts and talents that you put at the service of the Lord, the Church, and those you daily serve. That is what you continue to do, Sister Lawrence, in your daily work – you bring your many talents and wonderful spirit to the task at hand. Your title is “the collecting sister” or in layman's terms, “director of development” and I think we'd all agree you are very good at what you do. Your effectiveness, however, is not merely a matter of technique. Rather it's your dedication, trust, and joy that makes all of us want to support the mission of the Little Sisters and in some way to participate in it. With you, we take the Lord at his word: “Ask for whatever you will . . .!”

Jeanne Jugan had a beautiful devotion to the Blessed Mother – even saying that the Hail Mary would take us to heaven. So it is to the Blessed Virgin Mary that we entrust you this day, Sister Lawrence. We ask Mary, the model of consecration to God and fruitful virginity, to pray with you and to pray for you as you continue to live your vocation, in health, in joy, and ever greater holiness – *ad multos annos!*