

Homily for the Jubilee Mass In Jamaica on May 11, 2002.
Delivered by: Most Reverend The Honorable Samuel E. Carter, SJ, O.D.
Archbishop Emeritus of Kingston, Jamaica

**Celebrating Golden Jubilarians: Srs. Marie Goretti Lowe, Ann Martin Robonie
and Magdalen Marie Newton; and Diamond Jubilarians: Srs. Jean Francis Chen and Cecile Ho On**

Truly, truly, we can say: "This is the day the Lord has made; let us rejoice and be glad in it," as we come together with joy and thanksgiving in our hearts, to join our beloved jubilarians in this Eucharistic celebration as they offer praise and thanks to God for their yeats of dedicated and devoted service following in the footsteps of Francis of Assisi. This morning the prayer on their lips, I am sure, is this: "Bless the Lord, O my soul and let all that is within me bless his holy name. Bless the Lord, O my soul and do not forget all his wonderful gifts." The song in their hearts is none other than the words of Mary: "My soul proclaims the greatness of the Lord, and my spirit rejoices in God, my Saviour, because he has looked upon the humility of his handmaid, for the Almighty has done great things for me."

Dear Friends, fifty years ago, when our jubilarians of today as young ladies, full of life and laughter, full of fun and faith, first said "Yes to the Lord", little did they dream what plants God had in store for them, to make them instruments of his peace, to bring his love and light to shine in the hearts of many in darkness. Even now, which of us knows what plans God has for us, if we but say in faith, "Yes, Lord, Yes."

Who are these sisters whom we honour and celebrate today? As we take a cursory glance at the resume of the lives of these valiant, chosen women of God, we find as the poet, John Milton, puts it in his poem, *Lycidas*, "They were nursed upon the self-same hill, fed the same flock by fountain, shade and rill." Indeed, they all drank deeply of the springs of Franciscan Spirituality—humility, joy, pece and above all, an encounter with the living Jesus, resulting in a personal love of Jesus as Saviour and God—yes, indeed, loving him in all his creatures. Joined with this heartfelt desire, a willingness to be like Jesus, to follow in his footsteps, to be poor like him, to lead a simple life, to live in a loving community, to have fellowship and genuine love and concern for each other and thus to serve God all the days of one's life.

Thus schooled, thus fashioned in postulancy and novitiate in the Allegany Motherhouse of Franciscan Formation, our jubilarians of today were empowered to embark on their life work—a mission of love, to bring others to Christ. In classroom after classroom, in crowded city or rural schools, among the poor as well as the rich, these sisters, everyone of them, brought against hardships and difficulties, Christ's love, his peace and understanding to the children and parents alike. Thus first having known Jesus, having personally experienced his love in their own lives they are able to say like John, the beloved disciple, "What we have seen with our own eyes, what we have heart, we proclaim to you so that you, too, may fellowship with us, for our fellowship, our communion, is with the Father and with his Son, Jesus Christ.

Today, our jubilee sisters thank God for the many graces given them to be faithful to their commitment to live the Franciscan way of life. Today, we all join in thanking God for the many blessings they have brought our land. Many of us here, through the ministry of our jubilarians and other Franciscan sisters have come to know and love Jesus. So let us give thanks and praises to God our Father.

Thinking about the Franciscan sisters and what they have done for me personally at Holy Trinity Cathedral, at Sunday School and at St. Aloysius Boys' School last night I had a dream. Guess who dream me. Nobody but Miss Matty. She said to me, "Lickly Sammy, me hear say that great jubilee and jubilation going on up at Immaculate at Constant Spring. Listen me hear say it is quite a sinting—a Franciscan International Jubilation—an auspicious celebration for five of the sisers dem—three of them come from China, I mean to say them parents and grandparents came all the way from China, you know China people dem small but them live long. One of them, Sister G, the first holy nun to go to the University College of the West Indies, later on them make her head of St. Joseph's Teachers' College, then head of all the nuns dem for the whole island. Me tell you she small but tallawah. She even travel all the way to the country to start up new sin ting called retire. Look yah now, the more she do the smaller she get. You have to bend down low to see her—it must be cuse her name is Lowe. Come mek me tell you bout the other two China People, one sister J, she too is small, but she always smile sweetly and silent, but you know what, she can bake and make bun and cake and sweet things to make you mouth water. The other China Sister C—she is the Star

of the West, the Queen of Mo Bay. Think pon it, fifty years at one school. She surely love Jamaican pickney. Miss Matty say you must ask her bout her night at the cabaret in Gay Parre and watch her blush. But sait nuh, them have two more jubilarians, one is Merican, I hear say MacDonald and Burgher King want to put her on a billboard, she is kind of rotund, pleasingly plumb but with a smile to kill. The last jubilarian is a real Jamaican Browning, don't let the name Magdalene fool you, she ain't no sinner, but like the king's daughter she is a holy lady of radiant beauty within and without. Lickle Sammy, remember I Miss Matty taught you to be a true Franciscan tertiary, so you must big up your jubilee Franciscan sisters, they all deserve a golden crown and you know what is true them going get one bye and bye. But listen lickle Sammy, before I go, let me give you little labrish, me hear say that up at St. Elizabeth Motherhouse, them going to have one big jubilee bashment, not for five jubilarians but for 45. if you see the list, it read like World Olympics when Mericans win all the medals. Them celebrating jubilee—4 for 75 years, 4 for 70 years, 4 for 65 years, 14 for 60 years and just imagine 18 Golden Jubilarians and one deggah 25 years—too bad you can't go up to St. Elizabeth Motherhouse for that grand celebration on May 25. The say you love to travel too much, so keep yourself quiet like lickle Sammy and enjoy you Maculate celebration. MissMatty talk too much, me gone now. Walk good.

Miss Matty and dreams aside, let me ask what is the true significance of a Golden Jubilee? Thanksgiving to God, yes, but a jubilee has a deeper, challenging meaning for us all. In the book of Leviticus Chapter 25, Moses gave certain guidelines for the people of Israel. Accordingly it is laid down that every seventh year should be a "sabbatical year", a year of rest when no crops should be planted, man, beast and land should rest. Then after seven sabbaticals—that is seven times seven, 49 years, towards the end of the 49th year. The trumpet in Hebrew, Yobel, ram's horn was sounded to inaugurate the 50th year. "You will declare the 50th year sacred to the Lord and proclaim the liberation of all the inhabitants of the land. Thus fiftieth year is to be a jubilee year for all, each of you to return to his ancestral home. The 50th year introduces a time of social justice and reform. Slaves are to be freed, debts must be forgiven, let no one wrong his brother or his neighbour, but turn to Yahweh, your God. For the people of Israel, the 50th year, the jubilee year, provided an opportunity for reconciliation, a challenge and a call toholiness of life. Times have changed and we no longer live under the Mosaic Law, but the concept of the jubilee year, as a time of thanksgiving, a time of rejoicing, a time of turning to God, drawing closer to him still endures. Tow years ago the whole Catholic Church celebrated the great jubilee marking the 2000th anniversary of the birth of Christ. At the end of this glorious celebration, the Holy Father invited and urged all Catholics to launch out into the deep, to develop our spirituality, to come closer to Jesus, to bring Christ to the world of today. This is the challenge a jubilee brings to us—to do something beautiful for God.

My dearly beloved jubilarian sisters, let me invite you to reflect on your jubilee. Is it for you a sunrise or a sunset? For some people as they enter the autumnal twilight years of life, a jubilee is a sign as it were the beginning of sunset, you slowly fade away, with the sinking sun far out in the west. For others, with the love of Christ burning ardently, Golden Jubilee is a sunrise, they face the challenge of a new and closer life in Christ, growing older ever so gracefully with love and forgiveness in their hearts, bringing peace and tranquility to the members of their community and to all others who touch their lives.

Dear friends, we are living in a dark world today, one darkened by pain, sin, sorrow, violence, loneliness and heartache. Many people are searching for a way out of their darkness, looking for just a little ray of light. My dear jubilarians, many golden and diamond years lie not behind you but ahead of you. Jesus says to you jubilarians and to all of us, "You are the light of the world." Don't hide your light! Let it shine, let it shine for all the see, let your good deeds, your life of love and sacrifice, glow for all to see. When the light of Jesus is turned on within you, it shines out to others. Dear sisters and friends, may our future years be rays of light shining Christ's light on the paths of those around. Let each of us remember always, "You are the light of the world."

May the Lord bless us always and keep us in his love forever and ever. Amen, Amen.

(Archbishop Carter died four months after this beautiful celebration, on September 3rd. May he rest in peace.)