

Jubilee Reflection - July 30, 2016  
60th – Sister Mary Adrian McLean, OSB  
50th – Sister Magdalena Craig, OSB  
By Sister Tonette Sperando, OSB, Prioress

Today is a special day for our Jubilarians, Sister Mary Adrian McLean and Sister Magdalena Craig. To be celebrating fifty and sixty years of fidelity to a professed monastic way of life is no small feat. Today's celebration, though, is not just about them. Today, as these two Benedictine women renewed their monastic commitment, each solemnly professed member of this community, and I dare to say, the professed members of St. Bernard Abbey as well, recalled their own profession and gave thanks to the God who called us into being and continues to sustain us on this journey. Today, indeed, is a special day of gratitude and rejoicing.

I thank Bishop Foley, Bishop Emeritus of the Diocese of Birmingham, for being with us today. Thank you for your continued prayers and support for the sisters of our community.

To Abbot Cletus, Fr. Marcus, and the monks of St. Bernard: It is always a joy to have you celebrate with us, especially on the occasions where we give witness to that which bonds us as sisters and brothers in Christ, our monastic way of life. Thank you for being with us today.

Fr. Frank, your friendship throughout these many years has been a blessing to our community. Your words today have touched our hearts and have inspired us on the spiritual journey. Thank you for your presence with us and for being our friend.

To the family and friends of Sister Mary Adrian and Sister Magdalena, you have all had a special role in enriching the lives of these two sisters, who in turn, have enriched the life of our community. Thank you for being here today to honor them.

As with Father Frank, I, too, was given gentle guidelines about my reflection: Sister, keep it short and don't speak about us. So, Sisters Mary Adrian and Magdalena, as per your wish, I will not share with those gathered here today of your service to the people of God in the various external ministries you participated in for these past fifty and sixty years: of the numerous children and adults you have both touched through your years of teaching, administering, and ministering in schools and parishes located in Pensacola, Birmingham, Tuscaloosa, Huntsville, Elberta, Florence, and right here in Cullman.

Sister Mary Adrian, I will not share of the special needs children whose lives were enriched by your gentleness, love, and compassion. Nor will I share of your selfless service right here at our monastery and Benedictine Manor. And today, as you continue in your role as educator with your pottery students, I'll let your never-ending creativity, your positive energy and encouragement, and your zest for life that you so willingly share not only with your students but with your sisters in Christ as well... I'll let all of that be our little secret.

Sister Magdalena, you asked me not to let on to those who are gathered here today of how your love for good liturgy radiates from every pore of your being, of how over these many years you have inspired your sisters and so many others by your artistic planning of the liturgies and your beautiful organ and piano accompaniment for them. And, don't worry, I won't reveal the impact you have had on those in initial formation here at our monastery as well as in monasteries across the United States through your ministry as a director in our Benedictine formation program.

So, Jubilarians, I'm glad you asked me not to mention any of this about you because it really isn't needed. After fifty and sixty years of fidelity to the daily-ness of our monastic way of life, your joy, your prayerfulness, and your love for God tell it all! Your *fiat*, your *yes*, to God and to this Benedictine community of women fifty and sixty years ago was only the beginning of a magnificent journey that God had planned for you.

As I was preparing for today's celebration I held in one hand the Scripture passages and music selections made by our Jubilarians. In these selections, we heard of the deep desire to seek God and to understand that in doing so we must freely enter into the Paschal Mystery of Christ. We also heard in the various selections, a total surrender of self to God. As monastics we must willingly accept the daily dying of self so that Christ may live in us and that we may be transformed to give witness to the resurrection of Christ. And it is *that* witness, given by these two jubilarians, that I held in my other hand as I was reflecting on the meaning of today's celebration.

*In one hand* we have the desire of seeking God by freely accepting the daily dying and rising *and in the other hand* we have the reality of that lived experience. With both hands raised, we as monastics sing the *Suscipe*, our prayer-response to hearing and following God's voice. You heard our Jubilarians repeat their *Suscipe* and the solemnly professed members of the Community join them with their own *Suscipe*. That's when the individual and the Community become joined in heart and voice in asking God to receive our promise and to uphold and sustain us in the faithful living out of our promise.

And where are we to faithfully live out our promise? As St. Benedict instructs, it is in the school of the Lord's service; right here in the midst of our sisters in Christ. It is within the daily living of community, as joyous and as messy as it can be some days, that we remind one another that there is always more to learn, more to surrender, and more to give.

So in closing, Sister Mary Adrian and Sister Magdalena, thank you for the witness you have given to your sisters and to the people of God through your fifty and sixty years of fidelity to this, our Benedictine way of life. May God bless you now and always. And to the sisters of our Sacred Heart Community, may we continue to support, love, and challenge one another so that "as we progress in the monastic life and in faith, our hearts will swell with the unspeakable sweetness of love."