

Jubilee—October 14, 2017

The readings chosen for this Jubilee Liturgy
which we've just heard proclaimed
make it very clear
that the center,
the focus of this celebration,
is NOT
the eight jubilarians present.

Rather the focus
is on our Provident God
who has accompanied each of us
every step of every day
as we've tried to follow the admonitions
of the prophet Micah—
“to only do the right,
that is to act with justice
as we've tried to love with goodness and mercy
as we've tried to walk in the humble truth
that what God has provided is enough.”

There is perhaps no more graphic illustration
of the surety and abundance of God's Providence
than that described in today's Gospel reading from Luke.

For the Sisters and Associates of this community,
this particular gospel passage has long been a favorite.
We refer to it as “the Providence Gospel”
drawing comfort from the assurance
of God's personal care for our every need.

Again and again,
we are assured of God's constant,
unconditional,
indiscriminate,
absolute,

loving care
for each of us individually.

It is our Provident God
who says to us,
"Not to worry"!

However,
in the last couple of weeks
in anticipation of this day
I've had quite a bit of difficulty reconciling
the Gospel message
when faced with the realities
of what seems to be a world spinning out of control.

Perhaps
the most concerning,
because it touches so close to home,
is the outrageous devastation
caused by Hurricane Maria
which directly impacted our Sisters in Puerto Rico.

Throughout the ordeal
the mantra
that I kept hearing in my head
was not the comforting "not to worry"
but rather,
the disconcerting "we have no control".

In my fear and anxiety
I thought the two phrases were antithetical.
But the Gospel clearly declares
they are synonymous:
"if even the smallest things are beyond your control,
why are you anxious?
Will God not provide for you?
Oh, you of little faith"

My control,
our control,
is most certainly an illusion.
God's control is an absolute truth!
And God is ever and always Provident.
Our Provident God is with us at all times
not to magically intervene and change the course of things,
but rather intentionally
providing us with all we need
to make Providence visible and operative in our world.

This truth was poignantly illustrated for me
in a message received last week
from Hermana Elsa Medina Rivera,
a Silver Jubilarian, in Arecibo, Puerto Rico.

She wrote:

“Today is the 15th day since hurricane Maria.
I can still hear the noise of that atmospheric phenomena
that took everything in its path with such fury.
It carried away the dreams,
the hopes,
the dwellings,
and worst of all the life of many.
We are still struggling.
We still have no light.
I live one day at a time.
I do not want to think about tomorrow.
Today I am living with what I have.
Today I gave food to the birds
because they have so little to eat.
I washed clothes by hand.
I put water with sugar out for the bees
because there are no flowers for them to feed on.
I go to see what the neighbors need.
I talk to the mailman.
I share with the workers at San Felipe.

I pray and at the end of the day.
I trust in the prayers of you, my sisters,
to give me the strength to receive all that I need for tomorrow.”

So, like Elsa
we are called to put worry about our daily needs aside
and to do our part to make God’s Providence visible.
After 25 years of God’s faithfulness,
After 50 years of God’s faithfulness,
what do we have to lose?
what are we saving ourselves for?

Trusting that the God of Providence
has, and will, provide all that we need,
trusting that what the God of Providence provides
is and will always be enough,
we can anticipate the future with gladness,
perhaps we can even laugh at the days to come.

Because our Provident God is faithful,
we can be outrageous in our risk taking.
Because our Provident God is faithful,
we can be prodigal in our generosity.
Because our Provident God is faithful,
we can be radical in our hospitality.

So, today and tomorrow
and in all the days yet to come—
We exalt your providence of God...