

Good Afternoon. As always it is great to see so many of our graduates here together celebrating our alma mater.

It will be no surprise to you that I would like to spend just a few minutes talking about the Visitation. I can hear you say that's what you talk about every year! But the Visitation that I want to share with you today is the Visitation you all know – the Visitation in Dubuque, Iowa.

The Sisters of the Visitation first came to Dubuque in 1871 – six sisters from St. Louis with pianos, sacristy linens and hearts filled with love and desire to bring faith, culture and education to the young women of Dubuque. Within a short time they opened a school in the house in which they lived. The house still exists on West 3rd Street. The enrollment soon made it necessary to find a bigger place which led to acquiring the property on Alta Vista Street. The desire of these sisters remained strong through the years as the school's reputation for the development of young women in fine arts and academics continued to grow.

In 1953 the Sisters underwent a great change. Up to this time the Sisters were cloistered but, with permission from Rome, they were allowed to cross the street to the Nativity School to continue teaching the grade school children as they had been doing since the parish started in 1923.

In the 1950's Pope Pius XII said there would be no more permission to leave the cloister, so Archbishop Leo Binz, the Archbishop of Dubuque at that time, met and worked with the Sisters to no longer be cloistered but to become a diocesan community which would be responsible to the Archbishop of Dubuque instead of Rome.

All through these years young women continued to respond to God's invitation to dedicate their lives to God and His work. The 1970's also brought a noticeable change in the number of women deciding that the religious life was not for them. So many more opportunities were open and available for them to consider other ways to serve the Lord. With fewer Sisters and the increasing costs, the difficult decision to close the Academy was made in 1970.

And now it is 2017. There are four of us, still serving the Lord but noticeably somewhat slower, but hopefully win enthusiasm and love of the Lord. I am sure there are those that wonder what will happen to the four as years go by. God has watched over us throughout our entire lives and He continues to do so. It has been arranged that when we are no longer able to take care of ourselves, we will be with our friends and neighbors, the Sisters of the Presentation, just across the driveway. We are Sisters of the Visitation and will always be Sisters of the Visitation no matter where we live. We will always love and be concerned for our alumnae who have been part of our lives for so many years.

We thank you from the bottom of our hearts for your continued support in various ways. We have Mass offered in our chapel for all of you and your intentions every month.

We thank Sister Bernadine and our officers, Marlene, Linda, Sharon and Iyla for the work they do to bring us and keep us together.

We look forward to seeing all of you here next year!

God bless each and every one!

Thank you!