Speaking to his disciples the very night he was betrayed, Jesus said...and says to us now, especially to our Jubilarians,

“I have said all this to you so that my own joy may be in you and your joy may be complete.”

Is our joy complete?  It is certainly with God’s own joy that we are gathered in your honor here, today.... Is your joy, Dear Jubilarians, complete?  If not complete, given our COVID cautions, perhaps our joy is perfect.  For those not familiar with the phrase “perfect joy” our Father Francis coined it while walking with Brother Leo from Perugia to the Little Portion, the Portiuncala.  I have no idea how long a walk this is, but it was long enough for Francis to describe to Leo all manner of deep disappointments that his followers could experience...including being overlooked, insulted and even betrayed...and still, he said they should consider themselves experiencing PERFECT JOY!

Perhaps being limited in attendance today as we are, we might consider ours perfect joy....though perhaps in a milder form than Francis described that day.

To address this, my Sisters and Brothers, let us imagine together, in Spirit, that we can fill this holy place with all those we wish could be here, whether alive or on The Other Side.

Who do we invoke to be here with us?  Let’s begin with our deceased Jubilarians.... (I think of Jane Madejczyk and wonder just what would she be wearing if she could be here in the flesh. We never knew what, but we knew for sure it would be memorable. And no one else would be wearing what she was.)

We invite all our family members, our friends, all of our Covenant Companions, our ancestors, both familial and community....All those Live Streaming...we include our Sunday Faith Community...
And let’s invite those who encouraged you 25, 40, 60, 65 and 70 years ago...encouraged you to become a part of us....

Please call to mind and invite now all those who through those however many years you relied upon when times were tough and maybe your perfect joy almost did you in....with whom did you love to celebrate the wonderful times? Can you see their faces as they join us here in Spirit?

Lastly, if it isn’t just too playful, imagine with me Jesus our brother, Clara our Mother, and Francis and Clare, our father and sister, in a little semicircle either right here in Chapel or in a dimension almost visible near here. See them gazing intently at a mirror through which they see you, our Jubilarians. The Mirror, of course, is St. Clare’s Mirror of Eternity that we heard of in our second reading. I imagine very pleased looks on their faces, and Mother Clara nodding and saying, yes, yes, they let Love be the Queen.

Pushing this just a little bit farther...If we had a stadium, might we not invite all those whose lives you have touched, the hundreds, the thousands whether in Denver and Pueblo, CO; in Raymond and Waterloo, IA; in Chicago, Decatur, Joliet, Wheaton, Wauconda and Westchester, IL; in LaPorte, IN; in Milwaukee, Racine, and Willard, WI; not to mention those you touched in Pemantang Siantar, Indonesia...in Rome, Italy...in Santarem, and how many little villages in Brazil. In Ireland? I have likely missed places where you have served, but we get the idea, don’t we? We could FILL a stadium with those you have touched in your years as Franciscans.

We heard in the letter to the Ephesians... and to us,...St. Paul saying that your “roots and foundations” are in Love (and in your birth cities in the U.S., Ireland and Germany). We know this to be true of each of you we celebrate. We also know that your roots are in all those places where you served in our name... with each of you bringing your own inimitable Franciscan Gospel vision, with your hands and hearts and voices Christ's own.
Continuing with Ephesians, Paul describes “with God’s own power working in each of you, you were...and ARE...able to to do so much more than anyone could have asked or even thought of. As love took flesh in you, you shared in all those places “how broad and long, how high and deep, is Christ’s love.”

You did so through teaching, writing and social work
...through nursing and midwifery
...through Provincial, Congregational and everyday leadership
...through treasuring our resources and connections, our history, memories and legacies

There is no greater gift, Jesus said, that same night that he spoke of his joy, than to give one’s life for ones’ friends, and you have, my sisters
...through pastoring, catechizing, and fund-raising
...through offering healing massage and guidance as spiritual directors
...through creating Soul-worthy art and poetry

You gave yourselves
...through vocation work and forming those new to us and our charism
...through Sponsorship and Board chairing and membership
...through creating new, phenomenal ways to share our spiritual and financial resources

To this day some of you give your lives to your sisters and brothers
...through baking and cooking
...through lectoring, being Eucharistic ministers and sacristan

You serve
...through gardening...and kibitzing...and listening deeply...and walking with and advocating for those in need.
So, my friends, our Chapel is full. Our hearts are full. And I end with our prayer for you, dear Jubilarians...using our sister, Clare's words to Agnes of Prague:

We pray most earnestly that you ... “do feel what friends feel in tasting hidden sweetness reserved for those transformed by Love.”

We, the Wheaton Franciscans, have most assuredly been transformed by your lives intertwined with ours.

Personally, I pray that the sweetnesses aren’t all that hidden, and that they will well up within you and within us, and within all those with whom you will celebrate when you leave here, we pray that sweetness will well up and overflow, as this day unfolds. And that the overflow will continue to touch our world with various and glorious forms of sweetness, flowing from you for you ARE blessings in the sacred heart of the world.