

HOMILY OF HIS EXCELLENCY ARCHBISHOP CHRISTOPHE PIERRE
APOSTOLIC NUNCIO TO THE UNITED STATES
MASS FOR THE IMPOSITION OF THE PALLIUM UPON
HIS EXCELLENCY PAUL ETIENNE, METROPOLITAN ARCHBISHOP OF SEATTLE
CATHEDRAL OF ST. JAMES THE GREATER
THURSDAY, JULY 16, 2020

Your Excellencies, Fathers, Religious, Seminarians and Members of the People of God, Distinguished members of the government, Brothers and Sisters,

At the beginning of this Eucharistic celebration, I had the duty and privilege of imposing the pallium upon Archbishop Paul Etienne, the sixth archbishop of this beloved Archdiocese of Seattle. Just three years ago, I imposed the pallium upon Archbishop Etienne when he became Archbishop of Anchorage; however, the Holy Father saw a great need here in Seattle, initially in assisting Archbishop Sartain and eventually accepting responsibility for this Archdiocese.

The pallium is a piece of fabric woven with lamb's wool, which Pope Francis blessed this year on the feast of Saints Peter and Paul. It is simple yet has great meaning, as the Holy Father said on the feast: "The pallium is a sign of the unity between the sheep and the Shepherd who, like Jesus, carries the sheep on his shoulders, so as never to be separated from it." (POPE FRANCIS, HOMILY, SOLEMNITY OF SAINTS PETER AND PAUL, 29 JUNE 2020)

It reminds the Metropolitan Archbishop and the faithful that the particular vocation and mission of every Bishop is none other than to be a Good Shepherd – a shepherd who places his sheep, whether sick or weak, upon his shoulders, carries him, guides him, cares for him, and leads him to the source of living water.

The pallium is a sign of the essential and concrete dimension of being a Good Shepherd in a Metropolitan Church which seeks to promote, maintain and enhance the fraternal and effective communion of the Bishops of the Province among themselves; between the bishops and the faithful; and, of the bishops and the faithful with the Successor of Saint Peter and the whole Church.

This year, when blessing the pallia, the Holy Father emphasized two themes: unity and prophecy. I just touched upon unity, but with respect to prophecy, he said:

Today we need prophecy, but real prophecy... It makes me sad when I hear someone say, "We want a prophetic Church". All right. But what are you doing, so that the Church can be prophetic? We need lives that show the miracle of God's love. Not forcefulness, but forthrightness. Not palaver, but prayer. Not speeches, but service. ...We are not to become rich, but rather to love the poor. We are not to save up for ourselves, but to spend ourselves for others. To seek not the approval of this world, of being comfortable with everyone - here we say: "being comfortable with God and the devil", being comfortable with everyone; no, this is not prophecy. We need the joy of the world to come. Not better pastoral plans that seem to have their own self-contained efficiency, as if they were sacraments; efficient pastoral plans, no. We need pastors who offer their lives: lovers of God. (Ibid.)

Your Excellency, this is the prophetic witness to which the Holy Father calls you as you strengthen this Archdiocese and the other Dioceses of the Province. Prophecy. In the First Reading we heard from the Prophet Isaiah:

The Spirit of the LORD is upon me, because the LORD has anointed me. He has sent me to bring glad tidings to the lowly; to heal the brokenhearted; to proclaim liberty to the captives and release to the prisoners, to announce a year of favor from the Lord.

In Luke's Gospel, Jesus read this passage in the synagogue (Lk 4:17-19) and used it to explain His mission. Jesus confirmed His identity, for at His baptism the Spirit had descended upon Him (Lk 3:22). He was to be a Spirit-filled Messiah. The passage from Isaiah helps explain not only Jesus' identity but also His mission, in which you, Your Excellency, share in a particular way.

That mission was to bring glad tidings and to proclaim or preach. That is, he was sent to evangelize and to offer the kerygma. His privileged recipients are the poor, the *anawim*. Jesus will extend His ministry beyond the materially poor to those who are spiritually poor. His proclamation is one of liberty (*aphesis*). Isaiah's use of this proclamation of liberty refers back to the liberty associated with a jubilee year in Leviticus (Lev 25:10), during which those who were indebted were set free from their servitude. Jesus' ministry extends not only to those who have material debts but to those who need relief from the "debt" of their sins. His ministry is one of mercy.

Jesus proclaims liberty to those who are captive. He does so through physical healings. For example, He healed Simon's mother-in-law and the woman who had been crippled by an evil spirit for eighteen years (Lk 13:16). He also proclaimed release to the oppressed, or, rather "He sets at liberty those who are oppressed."

Finally, He announces a year of favor. 2020 does not seem like a year of favor. These are tumultuous times, and yet, Your Excellency, this Archdiocese and the surrounding Dioceses need a prophetic witness that offers Good News rather than negativity; that offers hope as a remedy for despair; that promises justice to those who are oppressed, whether by poverty due to this pandemic, or whether by racial injustice. The people need to be free from fear and at liberty to pursue justice and peace.

In short, they need a shepherd in their midst who bears the presence of Christ, the Good Shepherd. The Holy Father noted some of his expectations – forthrightness, prayer, service, love for the poor; spending our energies in sacrifice; rejection of worldliness; and pointing others to the Mystery – to "*the joy of the world to come.*"

Your vocation is far more than that of a politician or a worker at an NGO. You are called to be a Shepherd after the Heart of the Lord, drawing people above the purely material to recognize the Divine Presence in their midst. The vocation and mission of a Pastor is both challenging and rewarding. At its core, it helps people see that in the hands of God, everything is different – that living in communion with Christ is more than something merely human; that the Church as the family of God lives mercy, magnanimity, love, and communion; that the family of God is permanently sent, called to go forth lifting up the joy of the Gospel and showing the tenderness of the God who is the friend and shepherd of each person.

Your Excellency, in the name of the Lord, very consciously and with firm and growing faith, trust, love, sustained by the Holy Spirit, joining your hands, will, and heart to those of your brother Bishops of your suffragan dioceses, I exhort you to offer to the sheep of Christ a truly prophetic witness.

May Our Lady, who accompanies with her maternal love and prayers the steps of the pilgrim Church, sustain and support your service and pastoral ministry, and obtain for our brothers in the episcopacy, priests, consecrated persons and laity of this Ecclesiastical Province, the renewed grace and strength that will help us to live with courage, in fidelity and joy, our vocations as disciples, missionaries, and apostles, in the journey of faith. May Saint James the Greater, the first of the Apostles to shed his blood for Jesus, help you to bear witness to the power of Christ. May the Lord Jesus, the Good Shepherd, bless you always and abundantly! Amen.