

HOMILY OF HIS EXCELLENCY ARCHBISHOP CHRISTOPHE PIERRE
APOSTOLIC NUNCIO TO THE UNITED STATES
ON THE OCCASION OF THE 50TH ANNIVERSARY OF THE DEDICATION OF
SAINT IGNATIUS OF LOYOLA CHURCH
MEMORIAL OF SAINT CHARLES BORROMEO,
SAINT IGNATIUS OF LOYOLA CHURCH, CINCINNATI, OHIO, NOVEMBER 4, 2020

My Dear Friends in Christ,

As the Apostolic Nuncio, the personal representative of the Holy Father to this country, I want to express the spiritual closeness of His Holiness Pope Francis, assuring you of his prayers and heartfelt congratulations on this happy occasion in the life of your parish. I greet all those joining by live-streaming. Originally, I was to visit in May but due to the pandemic, I arrived in Cincinnati only now. I want you to know that the Pope accompanies you and wants to be close to you.

As your parish approaches its 75th anniversary, we give thanks to God for the many blessings and graces poured out upon the People of God in this place. Today's Gospel speaks of building a tower and calculating what it costs to build the tower. Your predecessors calculated the cost of building this church, prudently discerning what it would take for you to have a fitting place to worship of God. We give thanks to God for the many men and women who sacrificed to build this temple for the worship and glory of God. St. Ignatius of Loyola said that we should do everything *for the greater glory of God*.

It is one thing to build a temple; it is another thing for that temple to be made of living stones! A parish is more than a building; it is an evangelizing community that bears fruit, where the faith is handed on from generation to generation. It is a family of God, in which the gifts of different members are utilized to advance the Kingdom. It is a place in which missionary disciples are called, formed, and sent!

Today's Gospel speaks to us of the cost of discipleship. Great crowds traveled with Jesus. He used the occasion to explain what it means to follow Him – to be a disciple. **First, Jesus demands a commitment greater than one's attachment to one's own family.** The reference to hating one's relatives is a Jewish idiom for expressing one's preferences. Disciples should prefer Jesus – should love Jesus more than their families and even more than their own life. Of course, we should love our family members, our neighbors, and even our enemies, but to be a disciple, we must prefer Jesus to the world.

A second characteristic of a disciple is that he or she must carry his own cross and come after Jesus. Jesus supports His teaching by inviting His followers to deliberate whether they are prepared to follow. Following the Lord is not a decision to made lightly. It requires discernment.

Your parish patron, St. Ignatius, had rules for spiritual discernment. Pope Francis, as a spiritual son of Ignatius, has emphasized the need for discernment. Three verbs that help in understanding the concept of discernment in the thought of Pope Francis are: *to recognize; to interpret; and to choose*. We must recognize both our external challenges and the interior movements of the spirit. Individuals and communities must not only recognize challenges, but they must also learn to interpret experiences, especially in light of faith. In this regard, as individuals and communities attempt to understand the

meaning of that which they are experiencing and how to evaluate experiences; the hierarchy of truths of the Catholic Faith can assist in the discernment process.

Critical is the deliberative process, in which there is an encounter of persons with differing roles and ministries. Lay men and women, young and old, are called to fulfill the responsibilities of their baptism and confirmation, to work for the sanctification of the world, and to take part in the evangelizing mission of the Church, offering insights from their professional, personal and spiritual experiences. You assist your pastor in making choices that not only celebrate your past but help develop the path for the future. Finally, discernment demands making a choice, which the pastor does, having listened to the Lord, his superiors, and the flock. In a sense, all are meant to be engaged in the process of discernment. You work together as a parish family.

In the context of the Gospel, we must discern and choose whether to follow Jesus. If the first parable involves discerning how to build a tower, the second parable involves kings marching into battle trying to determine what it will cost to win. The stakes are high, for one's very life is on the line.

Again, St. Ignatius of Loyola, having been a former soldier, knows the enemy to be combatted. He describes him as a "military leader, setting about the conquest and seizure of the object he desires. The commander of an army, after setting up his camp and inspecting the fortifications and defenses of a fortress, attacks it at its weakest point."

We too must determine what we are prepared to do to win the battle; how we will defend ourselves using Scripture, Tradition, the sacraments, the rosary, and the virtues. We too must make a decisive choice to take our stand with Christ, making sacrifices for others and committing ourselves to victory. Each person must examine what he or she is prepared to do for the faith and for the parish.

Finally, Jesus provides a third condition of discipleship – renouncing all one's possessions. Jesus is really calling his disciples to be detached from their possessions. Today is the Memorial of St. Charles Borromeo. He became a Cardinal of the Roman Church at age 21. His uncle was the Pope. He had many of the world's possessions, considerable influence, and great abilities, tremendous wealth, but in the end, his true love was Jesus and His people.

During a time of plague, rather than simply assign others to minister to the sick, he left the comfort of his palace to minister to the dying. In the end, poverty teaches us how to be servants, following the example of Jesus, learning from him. Saint Charles Borromeo, the patron of bishops, reflecting on the washing of the disciples' feet, gives his expectations for the clergy, who, in turn, should offer good example to the faithful:

"If we desire to consider entirely the things that are mystically contained in Christ's example, we find the whole duty of an apostle expressed by him. He rose up from the Jewish supper. In like manner his ministers too must leave behind the lifestyle of the old man ... and put on the new, rising from just knowing to putting it into practice, from the meal to labor, from letter to the spirit. They must lay down their garments, that is cast away all impediments to the virtues, that they may be able to labor strenuously and gird themselves with white linen, that is, integrity of life. Then they draw the water of saving doctrine and wash the character and conduct of their subjects with doctrine, the Sacraments, and example. This, our leader and standard-bearer Christ did, so that we

might do the same. *The disciple is not above the Master* (Mt 10:24), nor is it fitting for servants of the humble Lord to be proud.” (CHARLES BORROMEIO, HOMILIA II, IN VOL. 1, JOSEPH ANTHONY SAX, ED. *SANCTI CAROLI BORROMEI HOMILIAE*, MLIAN: JOSEPH MARELLUM, 1747-1748)

Jesus has called us to be disciples and missionaries. To be a disciple means to love and to prefer Jesus over everyone and everything else; to carry your cross and to follow after Jesus, discerning carefully, what it takes to be a disciple; and finally, to renounce our possessions and worldly attachments so as to be able to serve those around us.

We are disciples, called to be salt of the earth. Salt represents the Wisdom of Faith. Salt also keeps things from corruption, reminding us of the need to stay free from sin and to spread holiness. Finally, salt adds flavor to our world. Our world needs the flavor and sweetness of the Gospel of Jesus Christ.

A phrase inscribed on the tomb of Ignatius of Loyola is “*Non coarctari a maximo, contineri tamen a minimo, divinum est.*” Literally, it means “not to be confined by the greatest, yet to be contained within the smallest, this is divine.” Perhaps, we could say that we should love the little things and carry out our mission lovingly in small matters within the horizon of the great things – both the challenges and the mission – that lie before us.

You at St. Ignatius have been worshipping in this church for fifty years and carrying out your mission for nearly seventy-five. As the world changes, do not be afraid. Do not be daunted or held back by the challenging tasks posed by a secularized world; rather, continue to seek the path of holiness in little and great things, in your families and in your school, in your neighborhoods.

The experience of the divine, even in small victories and experiences of grace and healing, gives us hope. Even if things seem dark, and I know you have had a difficult year, do not be discouraged but have hope. Christ is with us. He, the Teacher, accompanies the Church of His disciples. Dedicated to Christ and belonging to Him, as men and women of the Church, each one of us must be living witnesses to hope. I conclude with the words of Cardinal Henri De Lubac:

“A man of the Church will always remain open to hope; for him the horizon is never closed. Like St. Paul, he will want to be full of rejoicing in his sufferings and will go so far as to believe himself called ... to ‘fill up those things that are wanting in the sufferings of Christ ... for his body which is the Church.’, knowing that in Christ he has ‘the hope of glory’.” (Henri de Lubac, *The Splendour of the Church*, transl. Michael Mason, Deus Books: Glen Rock, 1956, 155.)

May you never lose this hope of glory. May the Holy Spirit fill your hearts so that you may do all things for the greater glory of God!