

HOMILY OF HIS EXCELLENCY ARCHBISHOP CHRISTOPHE PIERRE
APOSTOLIC NUNCIO TO THE UNITED STATES
MASS AND ADMISSION CEREMONY FOR THE CRUSADERS OF MARY
BASILICA OF THE NATIONAL SHRINE OF THE IMMACULATE CONCEPTION
FRIDAY, NOVEMBER 16, 2018

My Dear Friends in Christ,

I want to welcome you to this Basilica on this special occasion as Tatiana is formally admitted to the Crusaders of Mary. I greet all the members of the Crusaders of Mary, especially the Delegate for the General Director. As the Apostolic Nuncio, the Holy Father's representative to the United States, I wish to express to you the Holy Father's spiritual closeness, paternal affection, and heartfelt best wishes on this happy occasion in the life of the Church and in the life of your institute.

Today, our readings are taken from the Votive Mass of the Immaculate Conception. Our first reading from Genesis spoke of the fall of Adam and Eve, and their expulsion from Paradise through disobedience. In contrast, the Gospel speaks of Mary's *Fiat*, her Yes to God, through which the Messiah is conceived; her offspring will conquer the devil. Saint Irenaeus of Lyons writes: "The knot of Eve's disobedience was loosed by the obedience of Mary. For what the virgin Eve had bound fast through unbelief, this did the Virgin Mary set free through faith." (Irenaeus of Lyons, *Against Heresies*, 3.22.4)

As the New Eve, Mary was greater than the first Eve, for although both were conceived without sin, the first used her freedom to commit sin, while the New Eve used it, surrendering herself and her will to God, to defeat sin. Mary's freedom from sin and her Immaculate Conception were not the result of her own efforts but were a pure gift of God's grace. Free from sin, her heart was free to say Yes to God.

It is no wonder that the Archangel Gabriel greeted her with the words, "Hail, full of grace" or "Hail, highly favored one." Mary is literally one "who has been graced". The use of the verb *charitoō* indicates the bestowing of favor on Mary, not because of the angel's message but as an action completed in the past with effects that continue to the present. In view of her mission, by a singular grace, Mary has been transformed, and this transformation defines her identity as the Immaculate Conception and the Mother of the Redeemer. Mary is the highly-favored daughter who rejoices because the Lord is with her. The announcement of the angel Gabriel and the acceptance of her mission happened in the silence and hiddenness of Nazareth. Father Tomás Morales, SJ, said, "Holiness is divinized daily life, disappearing into Nazareth."

Today, Tatiana will commit herself to the path of holiness – to live daily her union with God, in the Secular Institute of the Crusaders of Mary. Like the Virgin, who said, "Let it be done to me according to your word," through an act of the will, she will surrender to God, living the life of the evangelical counsels in imitation of Christ and out of love for Him. How fitting it is that the formula for her acceptance begins with the *Suscipe* of St. Ignatius of Loyola, who asks only for God's grace and his love! Later, it echoes the same sentiment with the words of Saint Teresa of Avila, "God alone suffices."

Animated by God's grace and love, members of secular institutes sanctify the world in their hidden yet divinized daily life. Indeed, the hiddenness of Nazareth refers not only to Mary but also to our Lord, who worked during his so-called "hidden years" in Nazareth, under the guise

of being the son of a carpenter, sanctifying the world through his redemptive labor. Indeed, at the end of his life, in a public way, Jesus would work on behalf of all humanity during his Passion.

Just as Jesus worked for the salvation of the world, we too, responding to the call to holiness with a definitive Yes, share in His mission. We are disciples who learn to work from the Master, and we are missionaries who make known the Good News - that He saves and offers new life - where God has placed us to do His work.

Through our work, we come to discover our own identity. It is as Fr. Morales says, "Work is a means of bringing you closer to God, not an obstacle that impedes your access to Him ... The supreme reward of work is not what it allows you to gain, but what it lets you become."

Today, we celebrate the fact that a daughter of God is willing to consecrate herself in a special way to do the Lord's work and to commit herself to becoming a saint in the world. As Father Morales says, "Every Christian should make an altar of his work, on which he sacrifices himself in and with Christ."

The model disciple for each of us the Blessed Virgin, the New Eve, who by saying Yes to God became the Mother of the Redeemer. Her work was to be His Mother, and her work now is to be our Mother. Addressed as "Woman" at the Foot of the Cross, the Virgin as the New Eve continues to live – now in eternal happiness – the consequences of her Yes. Tatiana, as you begin to live more deeply the consequences of your Yes, know of our prayers and our hope that you too will find favor with God.