

HOMILY OF CARDINAL CHRISTOPHE PIERRE
APOSTOLIC NUNCIO TO THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA
MASS FOR THE PROFESSION OF TEMPORAL VOWS BY
TATIANA AMUNDSEN AND RACHEL MORIN, CRUSADERS OF MARY
SAINT JOHN PAUL II NATIONAL SHRINE
WASHINGTON, D.C.
OCTOBER 22, 2023

My dear friends in Christ,

What a joy to gather in this National Shrine on the memorial of Saint John Paul II, who had a deep appreciation for the consecrated life, and who made the Crusaders of Mary a Secular Institute of pontifical right. We know that he is with us as we celebrate this Mass, and that he blesses Tatiana and Rachel as they profess their temporal vows.

I want to welcome everyone who is here with us, including the General Director and Regional Director of the Crusaders, all the members of the Institute, and in a special way, the family members of Tatiana and Rachel. To everyone I wish to express the Holy Father’s spiritual closeness, paternal affection, and best wishes on this happy occasion.

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When the Pharisees, trying to trap Jesus, asked him whether it was lawful to pay taxes to Caesar, the Lord replied: “Repay to Caesar what belongs to Caesar, and to God what belongs to God.”¹ What a wise saying by our Lord! The Pharisees pretend that they are separate from this tainted world and its corruptions. But Jesus exposes their hypocrisy. After all, they depend on worldly means of power when it suits their interests. Most dramatically, they will come to depend on the authority of Caesar’s government when they want to put Jesus to death. So then, if you depend upon what Caesar provides – a system of law, an economy – you must contribute to the works of Caesar. But the most important thing of all is to give to God what belongs to God! And in this case, what belongs to God is to believe in the Messiah whom he has sent. But that is precisely what these Pharisees refuse to do.

Jesus, on the other hand, has no hypocrisy. He is exactly who he says he is: the Son of the living God. He belongs completely to the Father, and he gives himself completely to the Father.

It is this complete self-offering of Jesus that every person who undertakes the consecrated life wants to follow. Father Tomás Morales, the founder of the Crusaders of Mary, said that among those who are consecrated, “The consecrated lay person occupies a privileged and unique position within the Church.”² Because of the secular nature of your form of consecrated life, you continue to use many things to which “Caesar” has some claim: your secular work, material goods and the like. Yet through your consecration, you direct even these things totally to the service of God. You are “in the world” in order to be leaven, but you are not *of* the world. Rather, your vows make you belong entirely to God.

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By living the evangelical counsels, you increase the efficacy of the anointing that you received in Baptism. We heard something about anointing in the first reading from Isaiah. The Lord said to “his anointed”, Cyrus, that he would grasp his right hand, subdue nations before him, make kings run in his service, and open doors before him. We, who have the anointing of Baptism, enjoy a strength that is no less powerful than that of Cyrus. In fact, it is greater than the strength of Cyrus, because ours is a spiritual power, and not merely something that can be used to rule a material kingdom. When you give yourself to God through sacred vows, it is as if your baptismal anointing becomes even more “concentrated” because of the singularity with which your love and energy are directed.

Therefore, like Cyrus but even greater, the Lord holds you in his strength. When he “opens doors before you”, it means that he opens the way for you to spread the fragrance of your anointing, to evangelize simply because of who you are in relationship to God. No less than to Cyrus, God says to you: “I have called you by your name.” He calls you by name and makes you free to be a living witness to Christ’s love and to his Lordship in the world. By consecrating yourselves to God, you are agreeing with what God says to Cyrus: “I am the LORD and there is no other.” You are saying to the world: *For me, it is God alone.*

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In the second reading, Saint Paul and his fellow leaders gave thanks to God for the faith of the Thessalonians. Likewise, I, together with these priests and all who have observed your call and your response to grace, give thanks for what the Holy Spirit is doing in your lives. Pope Francis, in his recent exhortation on Saint Thérèse of Lisieux, quoted the Little Flower as saying: “It is confidence and nothing but confidence that must lead us to love”³.

Tatiana and Rachel, you have every reason for confidence as you make these temporal vows today. If you place yourself totally in God’s heart, he will fill you with himself; and then, he will pour himself out to everyone whom you encounter as you carry out your mission in his name.

¹ *Matthew 22:21.*

² Venerable Tomás Morales Pérez, S.J., *Thoughts*, N°159.

³ St. Therese of the Child Jesus and the Holy Face, Letter 197 to Sister Marie of the Sacred Heart, September 17, 1896; cited by Pope Francis, Apostolic Exhortation *C’est la confiance*, October 15, 2023, 1.