

**HOMILY OF HIS EMINENCE CARDINAL CHRISTOPHE PIERRE
APOSTOLIC NUNCIO TO THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA
HOLY MASS FOR THE THIRD SUNDAY OF ADVENT**

**COMMEMORATING 100 YEARS OF DOMINICAN SERVICE AT THE
PAPAL REPRESENTATION IN THE UNITED STATES**

**DOMINICAN HOUSE OF STUDIES, WASHINGTON, D.C.
DECEMBER 17, 2023**

Dear Friends in Christ,

It is a joy to be with you today, to commemorate 100 years of service on the part of Dominicans to the Holy Father's representation in the United States. Thank you, Fr. Schnackenburg, for the invitation to be with your community. I am grateful to Fr. Michael for his ongoing service to the Nunciature, and to all of the Dominican priests and their superiors who have kept this tradition going. The Pope's mission is blessed to have the accompaniment of Dominican spirituality. Through study, prayer, and preaching, Dominican friars commit themselves to the saving mission of Jesus Christ, which we celebrate in a special way during this season of Advent.

In the first reading we heard the words of Isaiah, which were a prophecy of the "mission statement" of the Messiah:

"The Spirit of the LORD God...has anointed me...to bring glad tidings to the poor, to heal the brokenhearted, to proclaim liberty to captives and release to the prisoners, to announce a year of favor from the LORD and a day of vindication by our God."¹

Because these words describe what it means to be the Christ, they also define the mission of every priest, and in a special way, one who is called to the Order of Preachers. Therefore, we should pay attention to what Isaiah says. He begins by announcing: "The Spirit of the LORD God is upon me, because the LORD has anointed me." In saying this, he is acknowledging that the action of God precedes the action of man. Before the preacher can give the proclamation, he must first receive the good news as a gift. Saint Louis Bertrand, the 16th century Dominican, said: "You ought to come out of the desert in order to go forth as a good preacher."²

What is this "desert"? In his Angelus address last Sunday, the Pope spoke of the desert from which John the Baptist preached. The desert, he said, "is the place of silence and essentials, where someone cannot afford to dwell on useless things, but needs to concentrate on what is indispensable in order to live."³

And so, each of us could ask himself: What is my personal “desert”? It might look a little different for each person; but in its essence, the desert is whatever helps us to experience silence and simplicity: those things which are necessary to have a pure encounter with the living God. It is there, in that personal encounter with God, that we will receive the anointing for our mission. From there will develop a proclamation that is effective because it is born from a genuine relationship with the Lord. Our message will be like that of Isaiah and Mary, filled with joy and humility. When Isaiah felt the anointing of God’s Spirit, he said: “I rejoice heartily in the LORD, in my God is the joy of my soul.”⁴ When Mary was overshadowed by the same Spirit, she sang: “[M]y spirit rejoices in God my Savior.”⁵ Joy is the fruit of time spent in the purity of God’s loving gaze.

From that desert comes also humility. Our world is filled with so much noise, and the Church is not immune from this. We are tempted to compete with the noise around us: to assert our idea in an aggressive and competitive way. But as the Proverb says, “Fools take no delight in understanding, but only in displaying what they think.”⁶ By retreating to the desert, we can listen to the “still, small voice” of God.⁷

This is how Mary was. Having received the Word of God, she was able to proclaim what she had received. She had no need “puff herself up”, because God had already filled her with his kindness and blessing. Therefore she simply proclaimed the truth that she was experiencing: “My soul proclaims the greatness of the Lord.”⁸ When we have opened ourselves to receive God’s Word, our proclamation is simply allowing that Word to overflow to others. It is exactly as Isaiah prophesied: “Streams will burst forth in the desert.”⁹

Advent is a precious season in which the Spirit calls each of us back to our personal desert. In our study, in our prayer, in our silence and listening, our proclamation will be formed. And our proclamation will be effective, because it will be filled with the joy and the humility that come from a true encounter with the Word of God. In this way, we will give service to the mission of the Church. That is what your fathers and elder brothers in the Order of Preachers have done, for which our Holy Father and many Popes before him are grateful.

May we praise, bless, and preach the Advent of our King.

¹ *Isaiah* 61:1-2.

² St. Louis Bertrand, Sermon for the Fourth Sunday of Advent.

³ Pope Francis, *Angelus* Address, December 10, 2023.

⁴ *Isaiah* 61:10.

⁵ *Luke* 1:47.

⁶ *Proverbs* 18:2.

⁷ Cf. *1 Kings* 19:12.

⁸ *Luke* 1:46.

⁹ *Isaiah* 35:6, First Reading at Mass for Monday of the Second Week of Advent.