

**HOMILY OF HIS EMINENCE CARDINAL CHRISTOPHE PIERRE
APOSTOLIC NUNCIO TO THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA**

**HOLY MASS WITH THE IMPOSITION OF THE PALLIUM UPON THE
MOST REVEREND THOMAS ZINKULA, ARCHBISHOP OF DUBUQUE
ST. ELIZABETH ANN SETON CHURCH – HIAWATHA, IOWA
SEPTEMBER 8, 2024**

Dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ,

It is a joy to be with you today, and to have placed the pallium upon Archbishop Zinkula, a sign that he is your Shepherd. By my presence here, I am happy to convey to you the spiritual closeness of Pope Francis, who shepherds all of us in the name of Christ.

To be a shepherd in the Church is have the kind of relationship with the people of God that Jesus himself has with us. As Pope Francis has said, shepherds walk with their people: at times in front to lead, sometimes in the middle to encourage and preserve the smell of the flock, and at times behind the flock to help them if they are getting off the path.¹

But to be a shepherd in the name of Christ, in his Church, means also so many other things. It means doing the things that Isaiah prophesied the Christ would do, which we heard in the first reading. It means saying “to those whose hearts are frightened: Be strong, fear not!” It means vindicating and saving those who have been oppressed. It means opening the eyes of those who are blind to the hope of salvation, while also clearing the ears of those who are deaf to the word of God. It means bringing strength to the lame by helping people realize their gifts and their calling. And it means opening up springs of water – the water of grace – for people who are thirsting for God’s help.²

In the Psalm we sang, “Praise the Lord, my soul!” because we see God fulfilling his promise in the Church. He “keeps faith forever, secures justice for the oppressed, gives food to the hungry”, and “sets captives free”.³ You see these things happening when you are involved in the prayer and work of the Church, in your

¹ Cf. Pope Francis, Address to the Faithful of the Diocese of Rome, 18 September 2021.

² Cf. *Isaiah* 35:4-7a.

³ *Psalm* 146:1b, 6-7.

parishes, and in this Diocese. You are part of this saving work when you participate in the work of Catholic charity, and when you come to Mass and celebrate the sacraments. When you live a life of prayer and invite Christ into the sorrowful and joyful experiences of your human life, you know that God is a healer and deliverer.

This reality of God's saving work among us is something that we should always rejoice in. Even though Jesus, in the Gospel passage which we heard, ordered the people not to tell anyone of the miracle he performed for the deaf man, they couldn't help but proclaim what they had seen: "He has done all things well."⁴

We should not forget: the physical healings which Jesus performed in the Gospels are still part of Christ's work in the world today. We should petition God to heal people, and rejoice when he does it. No longer does Jesus want us to keep silent about these wonders, and so we should proclaim the miracles that he does, because signs like these still bring people to faith.

But we also know that God does wondrous things in people's souls even when their bodies are not healed. This is why, in the ritual of Baptism, we repeat the "*Ephphatha!*" which Jesus pronounced over the man who was deaf. As the priest touches the ears and the mouth of the child to be baptized, he says: "May [the Lord Jesus] soon touch your ears to receive his word and your mouth to proclaim his faith, to the praise and glory of God the Father."

As we celebrate the vocation of Archbishop Zinkula – the vocation to be your bishop and shepherd – we also should rejoice in the sacrament that we all received, which joined us to Christ and made us a priestly people: the sacrament of Baptism. Our Baptism has configured us to Christ in such a way that we are sons and daughters of God our Father and temples of the Holy Spirit. Because of Baptism, we have the capacity to receive the Father's love, just as Christ is always receiving the Father's love. We have the authority to speak and act in the name and in the power of Christ, saying "Yes" to his love and to his command, and saying "No" to every attack against our identity and goodness. By Baptism we have the authority, and the commission, to do in Christ's name what Isaiah said the Christ would do: to encourage the fearful, defend the oppressed, enlighten those in darkness, and give voice to the voiceless.⁵ In fact, our service of the poor and the rejected distinguishes

⁴ Cf. *Mark* 7:36-37.

⁵ Cf. *Isaiah* 35:4-7a.

us as Christians. For as St. James said in the second reading: “Did not God choose those who are poor in the world to be rich in faith and heirs of the kingdom that he promised to those who love him?”⁶

My brothers and sisters, let’s praise the Lord for all the good that he has done and all that he continues to do – in his Church, in this Diocese, in our families, and in our own lives. As we “adhere to the faith in our glorious Lord Jesus Christ”⁷, let us do as the Lord does: love those who are the least, and bring to them the good news of his Kingdom. May God bless both the Shepherd and the flock of this Diocese, granting that you walk together with gladness and joy on the path of communion with Christ which leads to heaven.

⁶ *James* 2:5.

⁷ *James* 2:1.