

HOMILY OF HIS EMINENCE CARDINAL CHRISTOPHE PIERRE
APOSTOLIC NUNCIO TO THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA
MASS FOR THE 150TH ANNIVERSARY OF THE ARCHDIOCESE OF SAN ANTONIO
ST. MARY'S UNIVERSITY – SAN ANTONIO, TEXAS
OCTOBER 26, 2024

Dear Brothers and Sisters,

Congratulations! On behalf of the Holy Father, whom I am privileged to represent in this country, I offer you the spiritual communion of His Holiness. My brother Cardinals and Bishops, clergy and religious, lay faithful of this diocese, and everyone present: may God bless you and fill this day with grace for each of you.

In celebrating this Archdiocese, what we celebrate is a Church that Jesus established as his community of missionary disciples. In today's readings, we see two movements which are part of the Church's life. We can call these two movements "gathering" and "sending".

First, the prophet Zechariah speaks of the gathering. To the people of the Old Covenant, the prophet speaks of a time in the future when people of other nations will see that God is with his people, and they will come to Jerusalem to seek the Lord. As God's people in the New Covenant, we are the fulfillment of this prophecy. The Lord is with his Church, and into this Church we seek to gather anyone who wants to know and serve the Lord.

When we build our parishes, we seek to gather people as a worshipping community. When we hold a Eucharistic Revival, we call people to join us in our adoration of the Lord. When people come to the Church seeking the Lord, we give thanks and God is glorified.

But the gathering is not the only part of the mission. There must also be a sending. The nations come to seek the Lord, but as the Psalm says: "Proclaim his marvelous deeds to all the nations."¹ Saint Paul asks the question: "How can they call on him in whom they have not believed? And how can they believe in him of

¹ *Psalm 96:3.*

whom they have not heard? And how can they hear without someone to preach? And how can people preach unless they are sent?”²

So we see that there must always be a *sending* in the Church: a sending of disciples who are ready to be missionaries; people who are ready to proclaim the good news of Jesus who is risen, who is alive, who has encountered me and has given my life a new meaning. And our proclamation to others is this: He wants to encounter you also, and give your life new meaning. This is the “great commission” that Jesus gave to the eleven disciples on the mountain of his Ascension. “Go, therefore, and make disciples of all nations ... And behold, I am with you always, until the end of the age.”³

Brothers and sisters, what you are experiencing in this Archdiocesan celebration is a great gathering. It is fitting that you should come together on an anniversary such as this, to give praise to God for what he has done in your history, to proclaim to one another the ways he has filled your lives with grace and glory, and to worship him together in the Eucharist, in thanksgiving. The Apostles gathered in such a way, together with other members of the early Church. They came together to speak of the mighty works that God had done on their mission, to draw new encouragement and strength from one another, and to be filled with the Holy Spirit. But there was always a return to the mission. The gathering was a preparation for a “going out” again.

This is what we do from Sunday to Sunday. We gather as God’s disciples to celebrate his work in our lives, to eat together the Eucharistic meal, so that we can go out again as missionaries in the field of our ordinary work and our apostolates. More and more, we have to realize that our very nature as Church is missionary. Every one of us who has had an encounter with Christ and who lives as his disciple is a missionary. There are countless different fields in which we carry out our mission, but no matter where we act as missionaries in the world, the essence of our

² *Romans* 10:14.

³ *Matthew* 28:19, 20.

proclamation is the same: Christ has died, Christ is risen, and Christ is here to join your life to his own.

Please, enjoy this gathering. Look for the ways in which Christ's risen life is here among your fellow Catholics. Receive the good news from your fellow disciples, and share the good news with them. Let this celebration of the Eucharist expand your experience of the reality of Jesus living in our midst. Be fed by the word of God, his Body and Blood, and the energy of his own mystical life which is present here.

And then, filled with the strength of God's life which is in you: *Go out!* To your family and friends. To your co-workers and the people you pass by in your daily commute. To the social groups, sports clubs, and civic communities that you are part of. That is how we become a Church that is not only a "gathering place", a place of refuge from the world, or a club of the "elect"; but rather, the Church that is in the midst of the world – the salt, light, and leaven that activates a change in the world by placing the risen Christ in the midst of it.

"Go and teach all nations, says the Lord; I am with you always, until the end of the world."⁴

⁴ *Matthew* 28:19a, 20b.