

HOMILY OF HIS EXCELLENCY ARCHBISHOP CHRISTOPHE PIERRE
APOSTOLIC NUNCIO TO THE UNITED STATES
HOMILY FOR THE SIXTH SUNDAY OF EASTER
ENTRANCE CEREMONY TO THE CRUSADERS OF MARY
BASILICA OF THE NATIONAL SHRINE OF SAINT JOHN PAUL II
SUNDAY, MAY 26, 2019

My Dear Friends in Christ,

I want to welcome you to this Shrine on this special occasion as Rachel is formally admitted to the Crusaders of Mary. I greet all the members of the Crusaders of Mary, as well as her family members, friends, and friends and benefactors of the Institute. 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, as we continue to celebrate this joyful Easter Season.

Today, in our First Reading from Acts, we heard of the Council of Jerusalem. A dispute had arisen about whether the Gentiles had to follow the customs of the Jewish Law, including circumcision. Unable to resolve their problem, the disciples, including Paul and Barnabas, journeyed to Jerusalem to subject the matter to the authority of the Apostles and Elders. While today's Gospel omitted the details of their discussion, at a certain point, Peter spoke, and shortly thereafter, the matter was resolved. Gathered in prayer, the Apostles and elders, in openness to the Word of God and the Holy Spirit, through cordial dialogue and debate, discerned the way forward. Jesus' words in the Gospel – *The Advocate, the Holy Spirit ...will teach you everything and remind you of all that I told you* – are verified.

The letter of Paul and Barnabas which was to be read by Judas and Silas included the phrase "*It is the decision of the Holy Spirit and of us...*" It is not only the community of believers who makes a decision for the Church; rather, it is made also by the Holy Spirit, with whom they cooperate. The Spirit is the Advocate, whom the Father sends in Jesus' name. He defends us from error and consoles us in difficulty. He dwells within us, but the Spirit also brings us peace, a *peace which the world cannot give*.

It is the same Spirit who sanctifies us and animates the whole Church. On the evening of the Resurrection, Jesus appeared to the Apostles and wished them peace, not once, but twice, and then He breathed on them, saying, "*Receive the Holy Spirit.*" He followed this by commissioning the Apostles with the words, "*As the Father has sent me, so I send you.*"

On this Sixth Sunday of Easter, Jesus speaks of His mission (and ours), when He says, "*The word you hear is not mine but that of the Father who sent me.*" Jesus is the missionary of the Father. He has come to be a missionary of the Father's love, and He reminds His disciples: "*Whoever loves me will keep my word, and my Father will love him. Whoever does not love me will not keep my words.*"

The mission of Jesus is accomplished in love. In the Flesh, He made known the love of the Father most clearly in His sacrifice on the Cross, when He cried out, "*Consummatum est.*" Yes, Jesus' mission is accomplished in love and was accomplished so that we might have life and have it abundantly. If we want to be his disciples and continue His mission, then we must keep His word, particularly the commandment to love. The words and commandments of God are not meant to restrict our freedom but to help us use our freedom for excellence – for love. Yes, obedience to the Word is not a blind, slavish obedience, but rather an obedience, rooted in love.

The attractiveness of the love of Christ is the power by which the Church today grows. In the lives of believers, who carry out daily works of charity toward their neighbor, the love of God becomes manifest. The Holy Spirit, the bond of love between the Father and Son, is poured into the hearts of believers to give them courage and to help them persevere in their mission.

At the same time, this same Spirit is also the Sanctifier. Father Tomás Morales, SJ, the Founder of the Crusaders of Mary, said, "Holiness is divinized daily life." Today, Rachel will commit herself to the path of holiness – to live daily her union with God, in the Secular Institute of the Crusaders of Mary, committing herself more deeply to the mission of Christ in the Spirit.

It was the Holy Spirit, who overshadowed the Blessed Virgin, when she gave her consent at the Annunciation. Like the Virgin, who said, "Let it be done to me according to your word," through an act of the will, Rachel 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, through the power of the Spirit, sanctify the world in their hidden yet divinized daily life. 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."

Offering daily sacrifices to God, especially in our work, work offered to Him out of love, work performed in charity, is the means by which we can approach our destiny even now: the holy city of Jerusalem and the Lamb who sits on its throne. The Second Reading from Revelation reminds us not only of who we are called to be but also of our goal: the heavenly Jerusalem. The holy city and the Bride are place of God's full communion with humanity. This deep union with the Lamb, who was slain for us and who sits upon His throne, means that there is no longer and need for sun, moon, or lamp – for the Lord God Himself provides light to the city and its inhabitants.

As we approach the great Solemnity of the Ascension of the Lord, we also contemplate once more the model disciple who has preceded us to the heavenly Jerusalem – the Blessed Virgin Mary. Her work was to be the Mother of the Redeemer, and now she carries on her work as Mother of the Church. She lives now in eternal happiness – the consequences of her *Yes* to God in an openness to the Spirit; her *Yes* by which she received the Word and cherished the Word. Rachel, 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.