

**REMARKS OF HIS EXCELLENCY ARCHBISHOP CHRISTOPHE PIERRE**  
**APOSTOLIC NUNCIO TO THE UNITED STATES**  
**ANGELS UNAWARES UNVEILING EVENT**  
**THE CATHOLIC UNIVERSITY OF AMERICA, WASHINGTON, D.C.**  
**SEPTEMBER 27, 2020**

Your Excellency Archbishop Gregory, President Garvey, Dr. Barrueco, Mr. Schmalz, Distinguished Guests,  
Dear Friends:

As the Apostolic Nuncio, the personal representative of the Holy Father to the United States, I want to express the heartfelt best wishes of Pope Francis on this occasion and to assure all gathered here of the Holy Father's spiritual closeness as we mark the unveiling of Timothy Schmalz's "Angels Unawares" sculpture. Mr. Schmalz is no stranger to us, having created the Homeless Jesus and a more recent sculpture of Saint Patrick. We are here today for this unveiling of his "Angels Unawares" sculpture which made such a profound impact in Rome last September when it was unveiled in St. Peter's Square. I am delighted that it has made its way to the United States and to the nation's capital.

The sculpture depicts a group of migrants and refugees from different cultural and racial backgrounds and from diverse historic periods of time: from Mary and Joseph to Jews fleeing the Nazis to modern-day Syrian refugees. They stand together, shoulder to shoulder, huddled on a raft – in solidarity with one another. The angel wings, emerging from the center, suggest the presence of the sacred among them.

We know that the issue of migration is close to the heart of the Holy Father. He has encouraged us numerous times to build bridges, not walls – to open our hearts in welcome to the stranger. He desires earnestly that we welcome, protect, promote, and integrate migrants and refugees. But in his 2020 Message for the 106<sup>th</sup> Day for Migrants and Refugees, the Holy Father added six pairs of verbs to the original four – to welcome, protect, promote, and to integrate.

He said that we must *know* in order to *understand*; that is, we need to encounter people in the reality of their situations to better understand them. This sculpture helps us to know something of the human experience and to begin to gain understanding, even if only dimly, of the plight of our brothers and sisters.

Pope Francis encourages us to be *close* in order to *serve*. The sculpture reminds us of the need to accompany migrants and refugees, not from a distance, but in a deeply personal way through humble service. We must *listen* to their stories in order to be *reconciled*. Listening provides an opportunity to be reconciled with those who have been "discarded", with ourselves and with God, who never tires of offering us his mercy and who never ceases to listen to our cries. God heard the cries of His people and sent His Son to reconcile us to Himself.

As a society we *grow* by *sharing* with the stranger and those in need rather than selfishly hoarding for ourselves. How many people today see a stranger as a competitor rather than as a brother or sister. The Holy Father recommends that we find a remedy by emphasizing the importance of community:

"In fact, from among all the species, we are the beings who are the most cooperative and we flourish in community, as is seen well in the experience of the saints. There is a saying in Spanish that inspired me to write this phrase. It says: "*Floreceamos en racimo, como los*

*santos*": we flourish in community, as is seen well in the experience of the saints."  
(General Audience 26 August 2020)

If one of the original verbs is to *promote*, Pope Francis now encourages us to be *involved* in order to *promote*. We must find "the courage to create spaces where everyone can recognize that they are called" to a co-responsibility for our shared future together, which will permit and foster "new forms of hospitality, fraternity and solidarity" (Meditation in Saint Peter's Square, 27 March 2020).

Finally, His Holiness desires that we *cooperate* in order to *build* a civilization of love. Building the Kingdom of God is our common duty; for this reason, we must learn to cooperate, without yielding to the temptation to jealousy and discord.

The sculpture of Timothy Schmalz, with its depiction of people from diverse cultures and times, reminds us that people have always been on the move, following their hopes and dreams. It shows forth a "diversity" of peoples in "solidarity" with one another, of which the Holy Father says:

"Diversity in solidarity also possesses antibodies that heal social structures and processes that have degenerated into systems of injustice, systems of oppression. Therefore, solidarity today is the road to take towards a post-pandemic world, towards the healing of our interpersonal and social ills. There is no other way." (General Audience, 2 September 2020)

The sculpture reminds us of the call to solidarity and the task that lies ahead of us as we journey together on the one road to the God and Father of us all. Thank you.