

**HOMILY OF HIS EMINENCE CARDINAL CHRISTOPHE PIERRE  
APOSTOLIC NUNCIO TO THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA  
HOLY MASS FOR THE THIRD SUNDAY IN ORDINARY TIME  
CATHOLIC SOCIAL MINISTRY GATHERING  
WASHINGTON, D.C. – JANUARY 25, 2025**

We could not have chosen a more fitting Gospel passage for this Catholic Social Ministry Gathering.

Into the midst of a world whose hope for lasting communion with God was limited by sin and its effects, Jesus came to announce a new beginning for humanity. As the true Messiah, anointed by God, he had come to bring glad tidings to the poor, liberty to captives, sight to the blind, and freedom to the oppressed. By proclaiming “a year acceptable to the Lord”, he was offering a Jubilee for the people of God: By believing in Jesus, everyone could have their debt to God cancelled, and they could begin to live a new life.

On this Sunday, which the Pope has designated as “Sunday of the Word of God”, we get to hear the core message of the Gospel. And 2,000 years later, we are the recipients of this saving good news, which Christ has ratified through his death and resurrection.

What Jesus said in that synagogue in Nazareth remains our mission statement as disciples of Jesus. We are called and equipped to do the very same things that Jesus announced he had come to do: to give hope to the poor and justice to the oppressed. What’s more, the Church has now given us a Jubilee Year in which the efficacy of our work can be multiplied by an even wider opening of the treasury of God’s grace.

As we re-discover our mission as spoken by Christ, we are also aided by St. Paul’s words from the second reading. From the beginning of his conversion, Paul understood that the saving mission of Christ is carried out, not in isolation from each other, but as a body operating in harmony. Paul has the insight that, beyond simply not ignoring the “least” or most fragile members of the body, we actually give to those members *more* honor. In the body of Christ which is the Church, the so-called

“weaker” members—the poor, the sick, the persecuted, the oppressed—have something vital to contribute to the Church’s mission. Thus the poor are not only the *recipients* of our charity, but fellow agents with us in spreading the Gospel.<sup>1</sup> When we open our eyes to this reality—looking to discover the gifts and charisms of the people whom we serve—then this makes our social ministry all the more exciting. We get to see the great things that God is doing, not only through us, but through those whom we serve.

When the people heard Jesus’ messianic announcement in Nazareth, and as they followed him in his public ministry, many expected him to become a political liberator. Indeed, Christ’s saving work was “political”, but only in the truest sense of that term: He had come, indeed, to save a people (*polis*), but not by military might nor by the propaganda of an ideology. Rather, the new people of God would be identified by believing in Christ even when it meant suffering; hoping in his promise of resurrection; and loving all people, including those who opposed their message. Faith, hope, and love do not necessarily conquer earthly empires or win human praise. What they do achieve is entrance into “an eternal and universal kingdom; a kingdom of truth and life, a kingdom of holiness and grace, a kingdom of justice, love and peace.”<sup>2</sup>

What we celebrate in this Eucharist is that we are sharers in this Kingdom and members of this Body. May our unity in Christ grow ever stronger, and may our faith in Christ become more purified. May we continue to honor the least among us. And may our Catholic witness be as bold and authentic in the midst of the inhabitants of this nation, as was the witness of Jesus in his home town of Nazareth.

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<sup>1</sup> Cf. “For a Synodal Church: Communion, Participation, Mission”, Final Document of XVI Ordinary General Assembly of the Synod of Bishops, 26 October 2024, 19.

<sup>2</sup> *Roman Missal*, Third Typical Edition, Preface for the Mass of Christ the King.