

REMARKS OF HIS EXCELLENCY ARCHBISHOP CHRISTOPHE PIERRE
APOSTOLIC NUNCIO TO THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA
CATHOLIC PARTNERSHIP SUMMIT
FAIRMONT HOTEL, WASHINGTON, DC
FRIDAY, FEBRUARY 28, 2020

My Dear Friends in Christ,

As the Apostolic Nuncio, the personal representative of the Holy Father to the United States, I greet you in the name of Pope Francis, assuring you of his prayers and best wishes as we gather for this Catholic Partnership Summit to discuss the theme, “From Crisis to Co-Responsibility: Creating a New Culture of Leadership.” I thank Kim Smolik of the Leadership Roundtable for her invitation to be present with you and to present the Monan Medal Award this evening.

As you know, Father J. Donald Monan transformed Boston College, beginning in the early 1970s, by encouraging co-responsibility in the Church, employing the collegial style which imbued the Second Vatican Council and by making the most of his priestly and intellectual gifts, while identifying the gifts of the lay faithful, especially in the area of leadership, scholarship, and philanthropy.

Pope Francis has encouraged us to be a “synodal church”, a Church that walks together. Certainly, synodality involves listening to each other, as we have done and will continue to do, but it also requires listening to the Spirit of God, particularly as together we discern the path forward for the Church in this country. The Italian Bishops’ Conference described this communitarian discernment:

Communitarian discernment becomes a school of Christian life, a way of developing reciprocal love, co-responsibility, and insertion into the world, beginning from one’s own proper realm. It builds the Church as a community of brothers and sisters, equal in dignity, but with different gifts and tasks, shaping a figure, that ... becomes credible in daily, democratic society. (CONFERENZA EPISCOPALE ITALIANA, CON IL DONO DELLA CARITÀ DENTRO LA STORIA. LA CHIESA IN ITALIA DOPO IL CONVEGNO DI PALERMO, MAY 26 1996, N. 21, IN *ENCHIRIDION DELLA CONFERENZA EPISCOPALE ITALIANA*, VOL. 6, 146.)

The Church in the United States will regain her credibility not only by building trust through transparency, but also by building confidence among the bishops, clergy and religious and lay faithful, that the methods used for evangelization and stewardship are both sound and effective, as she confronts many of the challenges of contemporary society. The emphasis must be on “co-responsibility”, not “de-responsibility”, by which we neglect our responsibilities because we have failed in the past. Together, we look forward in hope.

Nevertheless, I must add that the Church’s direct task is not to provide men and women of our day with the solutions to the problems they encounter on their journey of faith; rather, our joint task, with each person living his or her vocation authentically, is to educate us to the religious sense, appealing to each person to adopt the right attitude to reality and the questions posed by the reality which we face. The role of the Church is to mediate the presence of Christ in the human reality.

Our problems, even with more effective and sophisticated methods gleaned from the expertise of those working in the world, may not go away; however, the way in which we confront those challenges

and our reality will be different because of Christ, whom we have encountered. It is not the Church's task to provide "pre-packaged" solutions, but rather to animate each person vocation so that in the freedom of the sons and daughters of God, the person may accept his or her proper responsibility for advancing the Kingdom.

Tonight, we present the J. Donald Monan, S.J. Distinguished Catholic Philanthropy Medal to three inspiring Catholic families, who have risen to the occasion and accepted this responsibility. While there were many worthy nominees, those we honor this evening are distinguished for their deep commitment to serve the people of God through their generous and steadfast investment of their time, talent, and treasure.

I want to emphasize - because the Holy Father emphasizes it - philanthropic giving is not enough. True charity requires personal engagement. Last year, the Holy Father said:

Charity is not a sterile performance or a simple offering to be given in order to silence our conscience. What we must never forget is that charity has its origin and its essence in God Himself (see Jn 4:8); charity is the embrace of God our Father to every man, especially to the least and the suffering, who occupy a preferential place in His heart. If we were to look at charity as a service, the Church would become a humanitarian agency and the service of charity its "logistics department". But the Church is not this, she is something different and much greater: she is, in Christ, the sign and instrument of God's love for humanity and for all of creation, our common home. (POPE FRANCIS, UDIENZA AI PARTECIPANTI ALL'ASSEMBLEA GENERALE DI *CARITAS INTERNATIONALIS*, 27 MAY 2019)

The Holy Father added:

We must always be careful not to fall into the temptation of living a hypocritical or deceitful charity, a charity identified with almsgiving, or as a "tranquilizer" for our uneasy consciences ... charity is not an idea or a pious feeling, but is an experiential encounter with Christ; it is the desire to live with the heart of God Who does not ask us to have a generic love, affection, solidarity, etc. for the poor, but to meet Himself in them (see Mt 25: 31-46), in the style of poverty. (IBID.)

The individuals and families we honor tonight are living examples of this encounter with Christ through engagement with the reality of life of the poor and so many others. They are coherent and credible witnesses to Our Lord. their philanthropy reflects their commitment, over generations, to being what we are all called to be as Christians: generous, merciful, faithful, engaged, humble, and Christ-like. How beautiful to see Christ alive and present in the life of the Church and in the lives of this evening's honorees!