

REMARKS OF HIS EXCELLENCY ARCHBISHOP CHRISTOPHE PIERRE
APOSTOLIC NUNCIO TO THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA
ON THE OCCASION OF THIRTIETH ANNIVERSARY OF THE DEDICATION OF THE SEMINARY AND THE TWENTY-THIRD
ANNUAL GALA DINNER
ARCHDIOCESAN MISSIONARY SEMINARY
REDEMPTORIS MATER OF NEWARK
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My dear friends in Christ, it is an honor to be here with you at this Twenty-Third Friends of the Seminary Gala Dinner to benefit the Archdiocesan Missionary Seminary *Redemptoris Mater* of Newark, on the occasion of the thirtieth anniversary of its founding. I also want to thank Monsignor Renato Grasselli, the Rector of the Seminary, for his gracious invitation, his kind words, and, above all, for his work, along with his collaborators, in the formation of future priests and missionaries. I also wish to recognize His Excellency Manuel Cruz, Auxiliary Bishop of Newark and to recognize his tremendous service in the field of healthcare, especially during this pandemic. I also acknowledge Father Manoel Oliveira for his outstanding work as an evangelist and Father David Songy for his dedicated service to priests at the St. Luke Institute. As the Apostolic Nuncio, the Holy Father's personal representative in the United States, I extend to all of you his warm and heartfelt greetings and wish to assure you of his spiritual closeness.

Saint John Paul II, whose feast we celebrated last week, is sometimes described as the 'founder' of the Neo-Catechumenal Way; he said that "missionary activity still represents the greatest challenge for the Church." Reflecting on these words, the Holy Father asked:

What would happen if we were to take these words seriously? We would realize that missionary outreach is *paradigmatic for all the Church's activity*. Along these lines the Latin American bishops stated that we "cannot passively and calmly wait in our church buildings"; we need to move "from a pastoral ministry of mere conservation to a decidedly missionary pastoral ministry." (Pope Francis, Apostolic Exhortation *Evangelii Gaudium*, 24 November 2013, 15)

I know that those of you who are part of the Way or are benefactors who support the mission have already adopted this missionary attitude, which we hope to inculcate in our future priests and really, in the whole Church. The new *Ratio Fundamentalis*, the document which guides priestly formation, reminds us that we are first and always disciples called to deepen our communion with the Master. Those called to the priesthood move from a discipleship stage to a configuration stage. During their time in seminary, men are configured more deeply to Christ the Priest and equipped to go forth on mission.

But to go forth on mission in this context means to go forth with a heart filled with mercy and compassion. Calling us to be true neighbors to all those whom we encounter, Jesus told His disciples the story of the Good Samaritan. At the conclusion of the parable, the scholar of the Law was asked by Jesus, "Who was neighbor to him?" And he answered, "the one who treated him with compassion." Jesus then commanded him, "Go and do likewise."

We are sent forth to be a Church that demonstrates the compassion of God. An evangelizing Church is a Samaritan Church. In his recent encyclical letter, Pope Francis wrote:

"The parable shows us how a community can be rebuilt by men and women who identify with the vulnerability of others, who reject the creation of a society of

exclusion, and act instead as neighbors, lifting up and rehabilitating the fallen for the sake of the common good.” (Pope Francis, Encyclical letter *Fratelli Tutti*, 67, 3 October 2020)

Saint John Paul II called for a new evangelization and a building of a civilization of love. Pope Francis is helping our future missionaries and priests discover how to continue doing that. Each of the men in formation and who have been formed here over the past few years, have been sent forth. They are told to *Go*.

On the occasion of the 50th anniversary of the Way in Rome, His Holiness described what it means to *Go*:

Go. Mission calls for departure. But in life there is a strong temptation to linger, to avoid risks, to be content to have the situation under control. It is easier to stay home, surrounded by those who love us, but this is not Jesus' way. He sends forth: "Go". He does not use half measures. He does not authorize short transfers or reimbursed travel, but tells his disciples, all his disciples just one word: "Go". Go: a powerful call that resonates in every cranny of Christian life; a clear invitation to always go out, pilgrims in search of a brother or sister who does not yet know the joy of God's love. (Address to Members of the Neocatechumenal Way, 5 May 2018)

The fruitfulness of the Church, a Church that goes forth, depends on God's grace and, in part, on having pastors, that is, priests, shepherds willing to go to the physical and existential peripheries. An evangelizing community is always concerned with fruit, because the Lord wants her to be fruitful, caring for the grain and not growing "impatient with the weeds," while discovering a "way to let the word take flesh in a particular situation and bear fruits of new life." (cf. *EG*, 24)

Your gifts, sacrifices, and prayers help make all this possible at the Redemptoris Mater Seminary in Newark and around the world. I thank you once more for your generosity and hospitality and commend you to the Mother of the Redeemer. May she intercede for you before her Divine Son so that you may receive "grace upon grace." Thank you. May God bless you.