

HOMILY OF HIS EXCELLENCY ARCHBISHOP CHRISTOPHE PIERRE
APOSTOLIC NUNCIO TO THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA
FRIDAY OF THE TWENTY-FOURTH WEEK IN ORDINARY TIME
CMSWR NATIONAL ASSEMBLY
BASILICA OF ST. LOUIS THE KING
ST. LOUIS, MISSOURI
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My Dear Sisters in Christ,

As the Apostolic Nuncio, I greet you in the name of the Holy Father and assure you of his prayers and spiritual closeness, asking that you extend his greetings to the members of your communities.

In today's the Gospel, we hear of Jesus' preaching as he journeys with the Twelve from one town to another preaching and proclaiming the good news of the Kingdom. This was a snapshot of his ordinary life, what occupied most of his days. He was announcing the kingdom and inviting people to enter, especially those who were sinners. He wanted to re-awaken in them the desire for a relationship with the living God who offered them life and mercy.

In the midst of all of their sufferings, illnesses, hardships and unfulfilled hopes, He proclaimed the Good News. The Scriptures were being fulfilled in their hearing, and people were invited to strive to enter through the narrow gate. The offer of salvation was not for the religious elite but was open to those who would unite themselves to Him. Christ encouraged His hearers to buy the treasure buried in a field and to sell everything they have for the precious pearl of the kingdom.

Luke adds another detail, a very important one, in the three short verses that constitute today's Gospel: some women were accompanying Jesus and the apostles, women who had received Jesus' healing power — they "had been cured of evil spirits and infirmities" — and wanted to spend their life, with faith and constancy, assisting him to heal others and raise them up. Three get named — Mary Magdalene, Joanna, the wife of Herod Antipas' *epitropos* or money-man Chuza, and Susanna — but he also says "and many others," who "provided for them out of their resources."

You sisters have left everything to follow Christ. You accompany the bishops, priests, and lay faithful with your prayers, sacrifices, and pastoral works as a response of love to the Lord who has embraced you with His mercy and love. He has called you and claimed you for His own, and, in gratitude, you have offered yourselves to Him in humble service. The whole Church is grateful for your service.

The women who accompanied Jesus were the ones who, to some degree, made possible Jesus' and the apostles' preaching. They provided the resources for Jesus and the Apostles to carry out the demands of their mission. They were content to provide the structural and practical support that was necessary for the sake of the proclamation of the Kingdom. Many sisters in your communities continue this same mission, but, while not called to be priests, you also, by God's grace, help provide leadership to the Church's various apostolates, just as Mary Magdalene was transformed into an "Apostle to the Apostles" at the time of the Resurrection.

Saint Paul too had many collaborators, some of whom were women. On Monday, we heard from the First Letter to the Corinthians about the Eucharistic Mystery; on Tuesday, we heard that the Holy Spirit inspires us all to cooperate for the building up of Christ's body the Church. There is a division of labor — apostles, prophets, teachers, administrators, etc. — as in a body between organs. For the body to be healthy, each of the parts must do its function.

The women of our Gospel were making possible much of what Jesus and His disciples were doing. Having received much from the mercy of Jesus, they loved much. They wanted to give Jesus and His mission all the love, the time, and the material goods they could. They were completely devoted to Him.

But why? It was not only a response of gratitude, but it was also because they believe in the mission. What was the purpose of Jesus' preaching and the apostles' preaching? It was to lift people up, to lead them ultimately from death to eternal life, from sin to sanctity, from light to darkness, from the kingdom of the world to the kingdom of God, from ignorance to a knowledge of God and the life He offered.

In today's first reading, Paul describes the reality of the resurrection to the Jewish and Greek Christians in Corinth who were doubting or denying it. There were doubtless some Jews, like the Sadducees, didn't believe in the resurrection. There were also many Greeks who believed in the immortality of the soul but viewed the body as a prison from which a person needed to be liberated in order to experience that immortality. They didn't deny *Jesus'* resurrection, but considered it a unique exception if He rose.

St. Paul sought to explain that if the resurrection is impossible for us then it was impossible for Jesus according to his humanity, and if we are not raised, and Christ is not raised, then our faith is vain, then our preaching is vain, Paul's labors are vain, and the forgiveness of sins is impossible.

If that is the case, then hope is gone, and death is victorious. But — and Paul finishes with a powerful conjunction — “but now Christ *has been raised from the dead*,” He says. He is the “first fruits of those who have fallen asleep.” He is the first of many. He had begun this Letter knowing and preaching nothing but Christ crucified, but he finished saying that the crucified Christ he preaches is the risen one bearing the wounds.

It is not enough to know the *fact* of Christ's resurrection and the *fact* of the bodily resurrection of all those who have died. We have to live the resurrection. As St. Paul said to the Colossians, “If Christ has been raised, seek the things that are above, where Christ is seated at the right hand of God.” The truth of Christ's resurrection must permeate our whole life.

As consecrated religious, your very lives witness to this seeking of things that are above, but the idea of the Resurrection permeating our whole lives is the task at hand as we carry out this most noble pursuit. The Lord offers us the precious gift of the Holy Eucharist to strengthen us on this journey, and this gift of His love can permeate and transform our whole life. In his exhortation *Sacramentum caritatis* (71) Benedict XVI reminded us the Eucharist is a mystery to be lived:

“Christianity's new worship includes and transfigures every aspect of life: ... Christians, in all their actions, are called to offer true worship to God. Here the intrinsically eucharistic nature of Christian life begins to take shape. The Eucharist, since it embraces the concrete, everyday existence of the believer, makes possible, day by day, the progressive transfiguration of all those called by grace

to reflect the image of the Son of God (cf. Rom 8:29ff.). There is nothing authentically human – our thoughts and affections, our words and deeds – that does not find in the sacrament of the Eucharist the form it needs to be lived to the full. Here we can see the full human import of the radical newness brought by Christ in the Eucharist: the worship of God in our lives cannot be relegated to something private and individual, but tends by its nature to permeate every aspect of our existence. Worship pleasing to God thus becomes a new way of living our whole life, each particular moment of which is lifted up, since it is lived as part of a relationship with Christ and as an offering to God”

May you, who continue to accompany the whole Church, be renewed by the gift of the Holy Eucharist.