

**HOMILY OF HIS EMINENCE CARDINAL CHRISTOPHE PIERRE
APOSTOLIC NUNCIO TO THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA
125TH ANNIVERSARY CELEBRATION MASS OF THANKSGIVING
CATHOLIC CHARITIES BROOKLYN AND QUEENS
CO-CATHEDRAL OF ST. JOSEPH – BROOKLYN, NEW YORK
NOVEMBER 17, 2024 (33RD SUNDAY IN ORDINARY TIME)**

Dear Brothers and Sisters,

On this weekend when we give thanks for 125 years of Charities of Brooklyn and Queens, it is fitting that we offer the greatest sacrifice of thanksgiving that we have: the Holy Eucharist. The readings for this Mass describe the sufferings that occur before the final coming of the Son of Man. But they also tell of the hope that is ours when, in the midst of things that pass away, we hold fast to the love which does not pass away. This can be an encouragement and an affirmation of the work that you do as part of the Church’s mission of charity.

In the first reading, the prophet Daniel foretells “a time unsurpassed in distress”, after which “the wise shall shine brightly like the splendor of the firmament, and those who lead the many to justice shall be like the stars forever”.¹ This is a passage that points to the “end times”. But we shouldn’t get caught up thinking, “When will this be?” For, as Jesus told his disciples: “But of that day or hour, no one knows.”² The Lord teaches us not to worry about predicting the time of his second coming, but rather: “Be watchful! Be alert!”³

To be watchful, to be alert, means to stay rooted in the present reality: to look for the presence of Christ and the signs of his Spirit, and to apply the Gospel message to the people whom we serve. This is how we are to “lead the many to justice”, and so become like lights in this world.⁴

¹ *Daniel* 12:1, 3.

² *Mark* 13:32.

³ *Mark* 13:33.

⁴ Cf. *Daniel* 12:3.

Jesus says in the Gospel: “Heaven and earth will pass away, but my words will not pass away.”⁵ To hear this – that even the heavens and earth will pass away – can be frightening. But the Lord tells us this, not to frighten us, but to remind us what truly matters in our lives and in our mission. If even the heavens and earth will pass away, then what does that say about other realities which are even less enduring than the heavens and earth – things such as our Catholic Charities projects, and the institutions that we have worked hard to develop over generations? These things have great importance to us; and yet, even they are not eternal. The institutions through which we carry out our mission, the programs that we offer: these are good and valuable inasmuch as they enable us to spread the Gospel. But what lasts forever is the Word of God and his love for his people. Let us never become so attached to a single institution, a favorite program, or a particular way of doing things, that we forget the reason for all of it: the spread of the living and saving word of God.

At the final coming of the Son of Man, the general judgment, and the completion of all things, even the Sacraments will cease. This is the case because, when the righteous come to live in communion with God and one another in heaven, the Sacraments will no longer be necessary to communicate divine life to us. That divine life will be communicated to us directly, as we live fully in God and see God “face to face”.

For now, we participate in the Sacraments with gratitude, especially as we come together to celebrate this Eucharist. The Sacraments, chiefly the Eucharist, are the ways in which God relates to us while we are still in this world. God uses the Sacraments in order to be with us, to touch us, to heal us, and to feed us, in a way that is adapted to our earthly nature. This is why he comes to us at this Mass in bread and wine. We can’t see and touch God in his divine, spiritual reality. And so, he came to us in the human flesh and blood of Jesus. Before leaving us, Jesus made himself physically present to us in this Sacrament of his Body and Blood. By eating and drinking, and sharing, we are able to relate to the human and divine person of

⁵ *Mark* 13:31.

Christ. This is how much God loves us! He desires to relate to us, and to give us a way of relating to him.

This, my brothers and sisters, is the kind of love that Christ tells us to “Go!” and put into the world. This is how we are to love the homeless, those addicted to drugs, those who are rejected and discriminated against in this unjust world. If we are just, we shall shine “like the stars” in this world, because we offer to people what God has offered us: relationship with him and the saving grace of his love. By evangelizing in this way, we experience the comforting joy of the Gospel, and we are able to proclaim the words of Psalm 16:

“Therefore my heart is glad and my soul rejoices,

...

You will show me the path to life,
fullness of joys in your presence,
the delights at your right hand forever.”⁶

God has promised this to us, and Christ prepares it. In our work of charity, may we continue to share this same promise and blessing with those whom we serve.

⁶ *Psalm* 16:10,11.