

Archbishop Lori encourages business leaders to be ambassadors of Christ

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Archbishop William E. Lori urged a group of Catholic business leaders to be ambassadors of Christ in the modern marketplace of ideas.

The archbishop celebrated Mass May 8 in the undercroft of the Basilica of the National Shrine of the Assumption of the Blessed Virgin Mary for the Baltimore chapter of Legatus, an international group of Catholic executives and business owners. He noted that there was no more appropriate reading for the day's Mass than the one from the Acts of the Apostles relating the proclamations of St. Paul in the Areopagus in Athens.

Paul did his homework before inviting the Greeks to know the Lord Jesus Christ while speaking in what was the Greek capital's "marketplace of ideas."

"What a wonderful example of being an ambassador for Christ," Archbishop Lori told the 30 people gathered for the Mass, noting that Paul coined the term "ambassador for Christ," which is where the name Legatus (Latin for ambassador) comes from.

"So it is for us," the archbishop said, noting that our Areopagus might be offices, circles of friends and other places where the church is being discussed. That gives Legatus members the opportunity to be ambassadors for Christ in sometimes-difficult situations, standing up for the values Paul lifted up.

The strength for that effort comes from the "fresh sharing of the Holy Spirit" that we receive from the altar where the Eucharist is celebrated, Archbishop Lori said.

The archbishop took the occasion of the Mass to bless a new altar for the undercroft. The altar was created by the basilica's facilities manager, Bill Bernard, from wood that was once the pews in the sisters' balcony of the basilica. The balcony was used by an order of cloistered Carmelite nuns who served the church in Baltimore, but has not been used for many decades.

After censing and blessing the new altar with holy water, Archbishop Lori placed inside the altar the relics of four saints: Charles Borromeo, Francis Xavier, Francis de Sales and Vincent de Paul. The Sulpician Fathers provided the first-class relics.

During a talk to the group after dinner in the basilica rectory, Archbishop Lori spoke about a topic on which he has worked for many years, the defense of religious liberty. "One of the greatest challenges we face is that many people don't think religious liberty is under threat," despite the several examples the archbishop related.

He said we must deal with the threats as the cultural issue it is, not as a political issue, though it has political implications. The way to address the concerns is to first embrace the person of Christ, because "everything changes" once we have met Christ as someone who lived and died and was resurrected for us.

When we have met Christ, then all the things the church teaches make sense. From that perspective, we can go out as witnesses. "If you see a priest who fully loves Christ and the church ... you will listen to him. You need to do the same."

Archbishop Lori invited the Legatus members to join him for a Mass at the basilica June 21, 7 p.m., at which the church in the U.S. will launch the second Fortnight for Freedom, a two-week period of prayer and activities before to defend religious liberty, culminating on Independence Day.

The archbishop will speak to another group of Catholic business people May 15, when he is the keynote speaker at the second annual dinner for the Catholic Business Network of Baltimore. The event will begin at 6:30 p.m. at Hayfields Country Club in Hunt Valley. Proceeds from the event will benefit CBN Baltimore's endowment fund to provide assistance for worthy students attending Catholic high schools in the Archdiocese of Baltimore.

