

# **Archbishop Lori's Homily: 29th Sunday in Ordinary Time; 50th Anniversary, Annunciation Parish, Rosedale**

*29th Sunday in Ordinary Time*

*50th Anniversary, Annunciation Parish, Rosedale*

*Oct. 20, 2018*

First, let me say how delighted I am to return to Annunciation Parish to celebrate this Mass of Thanksgiving marking the 50<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of your parish. It is a moment when we unite as a parish family to thank our God for providing this spiritual home, this sacred place. Today we remember the sacrifices made by the “founding families”, or if you will, the “charter members” of this parish – & I wonder if any of you are here this evening? Please stand, so that we can express our appreciation to you!

It is a moment to remember those who went before us in faith, especially Father A. Leo Abendschoen, your founding pastor, a.k.a. Fr. Gus, who was so beloved because he loved you so much . . . may he rest in peace! Many of your former pastors, diocesan and religious, have returned to celebrate with you on this happy occasion. Let us welcome them home and express our warmest thanks to them! In a special way, I want to join you in thanking the Conventual Franciscans for their past and current service to this parish, especially our current pastor, Fr. Timothy Dore and his team of Friars! Let's show our appreciation to them!

But we have reserved our most special and heartfelt thanks for one who has been like a thread of continuity in this parish amid all the changes. She's been here as long as most of you can remember – indeed for the last 33 years – someone who has given of herself most generously in your service, someone who knows everyone and everything there is to know about Annunciation. I refer, of course, to Sister Susan

Engel – Sister Susan, we warmly thank you!

## **The Reason for Establishing Parishes and Building Churches**

Well, we've come a long way since Fr. Gus purchased Harps' pig farm, the property on which Annunciation Parish now sits: nine acres and a farmhouse that served as the first rectory, a parish that borrowed territory from St. Anthony, St. Michael, & St. Clement. The first Mass, held at Elmwood School, was attended by 678 people and the first collection amounted to \$367.14. I know that Fr. Timothy took a vow of poverty but he's hoping you'll do better tonight! In short order the parish took shape with the appointment of Corporators, the establishment of a youth group, C.Y.O., men's and women's clubs, a religious formation program, and the signing the contract for a new church, the church in which we now worship, and much more. Behind these few sentences of mine are worlds of heartfelt prayer & dedicated service on the part of the entire parish family, turning dreams into reality. And just for the record, the first Mass was celebrated here on October 3, 1970. This time there were over 1,800 people in attendance but history is silent about the collection for *that* occasion!

But let us probe a little deeper! Why did our forebears make so many sacrifices to establish this parish? Surely it was not to build a monument to themselves. No, the real reason for building churches and establishing parishes is a deep hunger for the Word of God and for the living Presence of the Lord in our lives. It's the same impulse that motivated the early Christian martyrs who said (in Latin), "*Sine dominico non possumus*" – "*We cannot live without the Lord and the Eucharist!*" So, let us now do what this parish was created for in the first place, let us break open the Scriptures we have heard so as to enter into the banquet of Christ's Sacrifice with worthiness and joy, beginning with this observation:

## **It Is Christ Who Gathers Us in the Holy Spirit**

Hard as we may work to establish and maintain a parish, it is really Christ, our Great High Priest, who gathers us as a parish family, who gathers us indeed in the power of the Holy Spirit. And today's readings teach us who this Jesus is and what he was like, He, the Word made Flesh whose living Presence among us binds us together in faith and hope, fills us with love, and enables us to live our vocations as his disciples.

Taken together, the Scripture readings for this Sunday help us to know better the One whom we, as a Catholic community, claim as Lord & Savior. This Jesus was not a successful person as the world accounts success. Jesus wielded no earthly power. He had no possessions. He left us no writings. Yet his personality – a combination of authority and humility – amazed people. People were captivated by his teachings, confirmed as they were by miracles. Many in Israel wondered who he was and if he might possibly deliver them from the oppression of foreign captors, the latest of which was the Roman Empire. But Jesus was not to enjoy success either with the crowds or the authorities. Indeed, it was hard enough to get his apostles to understand what he was all about!

No sooner than Jesus predicted in some detail his forthcoming passion and death did James and John approach him, asking for his open-ended approval of their yet-to-be revealed request. Jesus, of course, did not fall for that tactic but instead asked them what they wanted. And what they wanted were positions of prominence in Jesus' government, in a kingdom that was all too earthly, all too tied to the perks of human power. Jesus asks them if they can undergo the Baptism he was facing and drink the Cup he was about to drink – In other words, he asks them if they are willing to share in his Crucifixion – his immersion, his baptism into the world of human suffering and sinfulness, the cup of suffering that he was about to drain. Without understanding, James and John eagerly answered “yes”, and by that time, the other apostles were thoroughly irritated with James and John.

Jesus then teaches them what they should be like – and in doing so – he teaches you and me what he is like so that we might imitate him. In a phrase, Jesus told his apostles and tells us to be meek, mild, and patient, just as he, the Great High Priest, is able to sympathize with us in our weakness, just as he, God's Son made flesh, taught with unassuming authority, just as he, who is Savior and Lord, would lay down his life in suffering to ransom us from the folly of our sinfulness, to enable you and me to approach the throne of God's mercy. How grateful we should be to Jesus, our gentle Savior, who gave himself completely in love to the Father for our sakes. This is the mystery into which we enter every time we celebrate the Eucharist. We partake of his Body broken for us and we drink the Cup of his suffering, so that we might become those men and women who expend ourselves in love for our families, our neighbors, the poor and vulnerable – so that we might be in the world today

witnesses to Jesus' redeeming Presence.

## **Concluding Reflections**

In celebrating this parish anniversary, we really celebrate not so much the bricks and mortar that surround us, but rather the humble, loving deeds of mercy and goodness that envelop us, deeds performed by countless parishioners throughout these past fifty years, acts of service and love recorded in no history books, recounted in no oral tradition, but known and cherished by the Lord, by the One who is the greatest of all because he is the Servant of all. In the end, the humility of love and the authenticity of service on the part of us all – in the end, this is what will bring us through the crisis that has gripped the Church because of harm done to innocents and harm covered up by church authority. Only a humility rooted in the truth and love of Jesus can make us trustworthy. Only a humility rooted in the truth and love of Jesus can make us servants who are ready to do whatever is necessary to rebuild God's Household, his Church.

But if, perchance, we are feeling as though the Lord has set the bar too high, if perchance we think it is too difficult to attain the degree of humility and service that Jesus models for us, then let us turn to Mary, the Patron of your Parish, Mary of the Annunciation, the lowly handmaid of the Lord, who, in a pivotal moment of salvation history, simply said, "Let it be done to me according to Thy Word." Mary who consented to our salvation will surely hear us when we ask her loving intercession in all needs, especially our need to think, to act, and to be like Jesus! May God bless us and keep us always in his love!