

Archbishop Lori's Homily: Saturday, 3rd Week of Easter; Missionaries of Charity

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Missionaries of Charity

Baltimore, Maryland

May 11, 2019

To Whom Shall We Go?

The words of St. Peter, "Lord, to whom shall we go", are words we might repeat when we are at wits' end. When plans fall through and frustrations mount, when we don't know where else to turn, we might just say, "Lord, to whom shall we go?"

In fact, Peter spoke those words in a difficult moment in the Lord's own ministry. Jesus had revealed himself as "the Bread of Life" - the living Word of God who would give his flesh for the life of the world. That revelation was met with quarreling and rejection among the crowd: People grumbled, "This saying is hard. Who can accept it?" Many left Jesus and returned to their former way of life. Jesus asked those who remained, including his Apostles, if they too would leave. Peter spoke for the rest of the Apostles: "To whom shall we go?" said Peter, "You have the words of everlasting life."

During Jesus' earthly life, Peter was loyal to Jesus and understood, however imperfectly, something of his greatness. After the Lord rose from the dead, ascended into heaven, and sent the Holy Spirit upon the Apostles, Peter finally understood that Jesus is the Source of life and salvation and that there is great power in his Name. With confidence Peter turned to the Lord and did great things in his Name. When Peter arrived at Lydda, he healed Aeneas, saying: "Jesus Christ heals you...!" At once, we read, all the inhabitants of Lydda and Sharon turned to the Lord. Moving on to Joppa, Peter raised Tabitha from the dead, not on his own but only in the name and the power of the Risen Lord. As she came back to life, many came to believe.

Dependence on the Lord in the Apostolate

These scenes from Scripture are instructive for everyone but especially for you, as Missionaries of Charity and your co-workers. As religious sisters, you have promised to live strictly according to Gospel standards, by your vows of chastity, poverty, and obedience and service to the poorest of the poor. Some are skeptical about your way of life; others reject it. Still others admire it but would find it impossible to embrace. You embrace it because God called you and sustains you in his grace, so long as you turn to the Lord as the Source of life and salvation. Those of you who are co-workers and volunteers share in the sisters' way of life. You absorb something of their spirit and share in their works of charity. But without the Lord we can do nothing. "Lord, to whom shall we go?"

In fact, the more we rely on the Lord, the more fruit our apostolate bears. We can never forget that it is not we who act but rather the Lord who acts through us. During this season of Easter, as we look ahead to Ascension and Pentecost, we too should seek with ever greater intensity the source of our life and strength in the Risen Lord and his victory over sin and death. And, as the Missionaries of Charity know so well, the primary way to do this is the prayer, especially Eucharistic Adoration, coupled with a sacrificial style of life.

As our love for the Eucharistic Lord deepens, the more we profess our faith from the depths of our own hearts: "Lord, to whom shall we go? You have the words of everlasting life." In coming to Jesus, in kneeling before him, in being present to the Lord who, in the wondrous mystery of the Eucharist remains with us, we absorb something of the Lord's mighty love; we grow in grace. We learn to love, not the God of our own creation, but rather the God who created us and whose ways are not our ways.

As a result, when we go forth in the Lord's Name, we are amazed. We are enabled to do the works of God sometimes even in spite of ourselves. We are enabled to engage in a charity that evangelizes, a charity that opens the minds and hearts even of those who are most resistant to the grace of God in their hearts. Just as Jesus promised, faith in him can move mountains! On the other hand, when we meet with discouragement or frustrations, we learn to trust in the Lord who died to save us.

For even in those moments of frustration, those moment when we meet with skepticism and unbelief or with human problems that seem impossible for anyone to address - the Lord is somehow working in us and through us.

And when our hearts are in touch with the Sacred Heart of Jesus, who assumed our poverty and gave his life to save us, then it is that our hearts are truly in touch with the poor. A heart truly consecrated to Jesus is a heart consecrated also the poor.

Conclusion

On this Saturday afternoon we turn to Mary, who first brought Christ to the world. May Mary, Mother of the Eucharist, lead us to Jesus for it only her Son who has the words of everlasting life. And may God bless us and keep us always in his love.