

Archbishop Lori's Homily: Memorial Mass; Knights of Columbus 137th Supreme Convention

Memorial Mass

Knights of Columbus 137th Supreme Convention

Minneapolis, MN

Aug. 8, 2019

Unity Overcomes Isolation

In the Gospel just proclaimed, Jesus says to us: "Do not let your hearts be troubled; have faith in God and have faith in me!" Yet, so often our hearts are troubled; so often they are filled with anxiety and sorrow. As we mull over our problems, we can often feel alone and isolated. Those feelings of anxiety and isolation grow more acute when spouses, loved ones, and friends are taken from us in death. Facing a thorny problem or just feeling a bit overwhelmed, we may find ourselves thinking of family members and friends whom we've lost in death. How we miss their love, friendship, kindness, and wisdom. In spite of our faith, nothing disturbs our peace of mind and heart quite like death.

Our theme - Knights of Columbus, Knights of Unity - addresses head-on those natural feelings of anxiety and isolation that death leaves in its wake. Our unity as knights is indeed an antidote to those feelings that can and do beset us. For the unity we share strengthens and encourages us on many levels. In a world that marginalizes religion and its influence, we are united in faith- helping one another to grow in holiness and encouraging one another to profess and live the faith in the public square. We are united in care and concern for one another and for our families and together we seek to instill in a polarized and angry world a renewed sense of civility, solidarity, and fraternity. We are united in charity as we band together in works of loving service unmatched by any other organization in the Church or in secular society. Participating in the Knights of Columbus means never having to go it alone (2X).

But our unity, our unity is realized most profoundly when we gather for Holy Mass through which we participate in a very real way in the communion of saints. By sharing sacramentally in the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ, you and I are united in a communion of life and love, first with the Triune God, and then with one another and with those who have preceded us in death.

The Communion of Saints Portrayed

Indeed, our belief in the communion of the saints is vividly portrayed in this Mass. We began our sacred liturgy by joining together in the Litany of the Saints, invoking those holy women and men not merely as heroes of the past but as those who are alive and united with the Risen Lord in unblemished love. With special reverence we invoked St. Dominic on this, his feast day, as well as the saints and blessed of our Order while remembering always our beloved founder, the Ven. Fr. Michael McGivney. We invoke the names of these holy ones with confidence, asking them to pray for us; and we can be sure that these heavenly friends of ours truly do intercede for us.

And even as we sought the prayers of that great 'cloud of witnesses' in heaven, our belief in the communion of saints was even more vividly portrayed as we carried in procession the relics of St. John Vianney, Patron of Parish Priests; St. Kateri Tekakwitha, the first Native American to be canonized; St. Teresa of Calcutta, amazing in her love of the Lord and her service to the poor; and St. John Paul II, a clarion voice raised prophetically in defense of human dignity, a dignity revealed and fully realized in the mystery of Christ, God's Incarnate Son. How close we feel to these saints whose relics we venerate this morning!

We will give further expression to our belief in the communion of saints when we listen in silence as the names of our beloved dead are solemnly read—deceased brother knights with whom we were united in lives of service; knights with whom we remain united even though they are separated from us in death. We are "Knights of Unity" most profoundly in communion of life and love which, Christ our Savior forged among us in the grace of the Holy Spirit, a unity that spans both time and eternity.

United in the Glorified Humanity of Jesus

As we invoke the saints and remember our beloved dead, today's Scripture readings shed light on what we are about. At the heart of our unity with one another and with our beloved dead is Jesus Christ, the Risen Lord who broke down the barriers of sin that impede our union with God and one another. To us, who are still prone to 'sit in darkness and in the shadow of death', St. Paul proclaims, not a word of empty optimism or cold consolation, but rather a word of hope, hope in Christ, the only hope that never disappoints. Ever the realist, St. Paul reminds us that our anxiety and isolation are rooted in our enmity with God, an estrangement from God and others brought about sin. Left to our own devices, we're powerless to overcome that alienation. So, says St. Paul 'while we were yet sinners' the Son of God assumed our humanity died to redeem us. By his death our sins were destroyed; by his resurrection, our life was restored. And the news gets even better! The power of Jesus' redeeming love does not remain locked in the distant past, for through the Holy Spirit, God's is poured into our hearts, even now in this Eucharist wherein we receive the Lord's Body and Blood.

And so it is that our profoundest unity with one another and with saints is rooted in nothing other than the glorified humanity of our divine Savior, Jesus Christ. In him 'who became like us in all things but sin', in him who is "the way, the truth, and the life", we have access to the Father's love and to the forgiveness of our sins. Already in this vale of tears, we share 'in the lot of the saints in light', that is to say, in the heavenly destiny of God's holy ones. When Jesus speaks to us today of the many dwelling places prepared for us in his Father's house, let us understand him clearly. In the words of the renowned Scripture scholar, Fr. Francis Martin, "Heaven is not so much a place as it is the divine communion of life and love which we share through the glorified humanity of Jesus." To live in Christ Jesus is heaven . . . for those of us on earth; for the dead who are still being purified; and above all for the saints who have attained the fullness of redemption. So it is that we now worship the very 'source and summit' of our unity!

Unity: A Blessing to Be Trusted and Shared

I often wonder, and perhaps you do as well, how and why so many people try to go it alone... without a relationship with the Lord, without God's word or the sacraments, without the support of a faith-community and without the friendship of the saints.

For all our technical interconnectedness, many people are disconnected from meaningful relationships with God and others.

We are truly blessed as members of the family of the Knights of Columbus to be united in Christ with one another and with those who have gone before us. So, let us resolve, here and now, to share the blessing of our unity by inviting others to become a part of the Knights of Columbus. Let us also resolve, here and now, to take our Savior at his word when he says to us, "Let not your hearts be troubled!" For our hope in Christ Jesus will never, never disappoint us! Vivat Jesus!