

# **Archbishop Lori's Homily: Opening Mass of the Holy Spirit, Institute of Notre Dame 170th Anniversary**

*Opening Mass of the Holy Spirit*

*IND's 170th Anniversary*

*Institute of Notre Dame*

*September 20, 2017*

Many thanks for inviting me to offer this Mass of the Holy Spirit and to join with you in celebrating the 170<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the founding of the Institute of Notre Dame. What a proud heritage – a heritage that began in 1833 when Caroline Gerhardinger (Bl. Theresa of Jesus), with only a few others, founded the School Sisters of Notre Dame in Germany. Only 14 years later, in 1847, they arrived in the United States to extend their mission of educating young people, especially young women. Not long thereafter the sisters made their way, happily, to Baltimore where they were able to purchase a convent with the help of Bishop John Neumann, now St. John Neumann. On October 28, with only two young girls as students, what became the Institute of Notre Dame opened its doors.

There would be many challenges ahead, many things to threaten and disrupt the mission of the Sisters – many changes to respond to, many new needs to meet – yet through it all the School Sisters of Notre Dame, their co-workers, their school families, and their students have stood tall – and so, here we are today, celebrating 170 years and looking to a future full of hope! Warmest congratulations!

IND has a long history but every new academic year is a new beginning. Although you have been hard at work for several weeks, we have today the opportunity to mark the beginning of this school year with a Mass invoking the special help of the Holy Spirit – asking that the same Spirit who inspired Bl. Theresa and those pioneering SSND's, will inspire us in our time, in the opportunities and challenges that lie before us.

And today's Scripture readings help us see how we can respond to those opportunities and challenges. They tell us that we are gifted, called, and missioned . . . Let us see what that means here at IND.

The prophet Isaiah foresees how we are gifted, for he prophesies about the coming of a Messiah who will be filled with the gifts of the Holy Spirit - "a spirit of wisdom and of understanding, a spirit of counsel and of strength, a spirit of knowledge and of fear of the Lord..."

As Jesus began his ministry, he said to the people in the Synagogue, "The Spirit of the Lord is upon me." And throughout his ministry of preaching, curing, and giving his life to save us - Jesus was filled with wisdom, understanding, right judgment, strength, knowledge, and a holy reverence for his Father in heaven.

As we listen to Isaiah we realize that we've been given the same gifts, first in our Baptism and then they were deepened in us in Confirmation. Even if you haven't thought about them for a while, the gifts of the Holy Spirit can always be stirred into flame. They enable you and me to be like Jesus and to live like Jesus here and now. This means learning to pray like Jesus and to pray with Jesus most especially in the celebration of the Eucharist on Sunday. It means learning to live like Jesus by loving God and neighbor, by developing & using your wonderful natural gifts & talents for the sake of others, by fostering in your hearts a special love for the poor and vulnerable, and by learning to be people who build bridges of understanding in a culture that often seems to be very divided.

These gifts of the Holy Spirit are not your own private possession. For you are not only gifted, you are also called, as St. Paul makes very clear in today's reading from the Letter to the Romans: "Do not conform yourselves to this age," he writes, "but be transformed by the renewal of your mind, that you may discern the will of God, what is good and pleasing and perfect."

So, you have been given the gifts of the Holy Spirit and many other diverse gifts and talents - but with those gifts comes a tremendous responsibility. You are called not merely to be like everyone else or think like everyone else but instead to seek, to discern the will of God and to do it in your lives— guided, as the IND philosophy would say, by your "Christian conscience". Each of you is called to a vocation in life

and to some special form of service. As Blessed John Henry Newman wrote many years ago, "God knows me and calls me by my name... God has created me to do him some definite service; he has committed some work to me which he has not committed to another..." This was surely true in the life of Blessed Theresa of Jesus but it's also true in your lives. IND is a wonderful place in which to discern what it is that God has in mind for you. And when we embrace God's will for our life, we find true joy. "In [God's] will," wrote Dante, "is our peace."

And finally, today's Gospel speaks of how you are missioned. It's not enough to be gifted, not enough to be called, we also have to go, as Pope Francis often says, beyond our comfort zone. We have been entrusted with a mission but in fulfilling that mission we have to bear the good fruit of the Gospel – just as Blessed Theresa of Jesus put her gifts at the Lord's disposal, by answering the Lord's call to religious life, then, going out on mission. Think of the good fruit, the good outcomes, the blessings, that have resulted from what those pioneering SSND's did so long ago. Theirs was a life of love and service that transformed the world around them. That's what you're called to do in your lives in the 21<sup>st</sup> century. As you live your life right now, what effect is it having on others? As you move into the future, go to college and find your vocation and career, ask yourself often if your life is one of love and service that transforms the world around you.

It's difficult if not impossible for us to lead generous and fruitful lives. For that reason, Jesus tells us to remain connected to him in the Holy Spirit, the way branches are connected to the vine. We are to draw our inspiration, our strength, and our very life from Jesus by remaining in the Lord's love and by keeping his commandments. And the most important way we're connected to Jesus is the Eucharist in which we share most deeply in the Lord's presence and in all that the Lord did to save us and to make us living reflections of his love.

So please accept my warmest congratulations. With you, I hope and pray that this 170<sup>th</sup> year at IND will be its greatest, for in God's grace you are gifted, called, and missioned. May God bless you and keep you always in his love.