

Archbishop Lori's Homily: Vigil Service and Promotions; Middle Atlantic Lieutenancy

Vigil Service and Promotions

Middle Atlantic Lieutenancy

St. Mary's Seminary, Roland Park

October 27, 2017

We have gathered this evening for a vigil of prayer. This vigil brings us first and foremost to the Cross. We find ourselves standing in faith with Mary, the Mother of Jesus, with John, the beloved disciple, and with all the holy women who accompanied Jesus to Calvary. We also find ourselves with Joseph of Arimathea in whose tomb the body of the crucified Savior was laid.

These, in a certain sense, were the first Knights and Ladies of the Holy Sepulchre. They were original witnesses to the great events that brought us to new life in Christ: the forgiveness of our sins and a share in the inner life of the Holy Trinity. In their company also we keep vigil this night- reading Scripture, raising our voices in God's praises, seeking to welcome the grace, mercy, and goodness that flows from the Cross into our hearts through the Holy Spirit.

The Order of the Holy Sepulchre fosters and protects the places made holy by the life, death, and resurrection of Our Savior, Jesus Christ. Let us, as members of this venerable Order, cherish in our hearts what took place in these holy sites, events that are renewed and re-enacted at the altar of the Lord, whenever the sacred mysteries are celebrated. Let us experience profound joy and thanksgiving as we contemplate the depths of the Savior's love for us. May we say with St. Paul: "He loves me and he gave his life for me!" (Gal. 2:20)

As baptized Catholics, we share in the death and resurrection of Jesus. But we are also Knights and Ladies of the Holy Sepulchre. This means that we are called upon to be strong, virtuous, and courageous in our defense of the faith and charity toward

those in need, and in our mission to foster the faith in the Holy Land – where so often the Christians are marginalized and persecuted. This brings us to the heart of the Order’s mission that began nearly a millennium ago, a mission that has changed over time yet remained the same.

Where do we find the strength to be those strong, virtuous, and loving defenders of the faith and defenders of our fellow Christians? Is it not the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ? Is it not at the foot of the Cross and at the door of the tomb whence the Crucified Savior emerged victorious?

There do we find the strength to respond to St. Paul’s challenge addressed to each of us in our reading from his letter to the Ephesians: to resist the tactics of the evil one; to resist that violence and disorder which the powers of evil plant in human hearts; to be steadfast in the Gospel of Peace. Our helmet, our sword, are not earthly weapons; rather, we resist the powers of sin and death with the weapons of righteousness, with that love of the crucified and risen Lord that is stronger than sin and more powerful than death.

How, then, shall we understand the investitures on the morrow and the promotions conferred this evening? Surely these honors represent well-deserved recognition of the meritorious service of our members to the Order’s mission. Surely these promotions recognize the love and devotion our members have for the holy places and for those who live in the Holy Land.

Yet, in the spirituality of the Order, the promotions conferred this night mean even more than that. Yes, the insignia to be blessed and bestowed signal your deepening valiance in defending and propagating the Christian faith. But, at the end of the day, every promotion must signal growth in holiness, a deeper participation in the paschal mystery, and an ever-deeper participation in Triune love – a participation that leads to an ever-greater spirit of self-sacrifice on behalf of our “neighbor” – including our “neighbors” in the Middle East.

Finally, as we stand beneath the Cross in vigil, as we gaze in amazement on the Eucharistic Lord, let our hearts be filled with hope so that we may set our sites on the New and Eternal Jerusalem, where Christ is seated at the right hand of the Father to intercede for us. Here is where every tear is wiped away, every sorrow,

every worry, every source of anxiety. It is toward this Holy City that we journey in faith hoping one day to receive the ultimate “promotion” – “Come, you who have been blessed of my Father. Inherit the Kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world.” (Mt. 25:34).

May the Lord bless us and keep us always in your love!