

April 8, 2020

Dear Beloved Parishioners of Christ on The Mountain,

I wanted share my reflections with you about the Chrism Mass celebrated with Archbishop Samuel Aquila yesterday. The Chrism Mass is celebrated with the bishop and his priests gathered around him. This was achieved virtually yesterday because of the pandemic. The holy oils of the church are blessed and consecrated at this Mass. These are the Oil of the Sick used to heal, the Oil of Catechumens used to strengthen and the Oil of the Chrism used to consecrate. It is also the time for priests to renew their priestly promises.

Archbishop Aquila invited the priests and people to reflect on Pope Francis' Apostolic Exhortation On the Call to Holiness. The pope encourages us to be saints and to be holy. We can attempt this only in light of the beating heart of the gospel which is Mercy. We can approach this beating heart through prayer and meditation which leads us to the understanding that we are beloved sons and daughters of the Father. We cry out abba father or, in English, daddy father. Like the father of the father of the prodigal son who allows us to enter chaos and even into sin. The father that runs to meet us when we return. The father who is constantly dying and rising with us. This love transforms the human heart from self centered actions to actions of love and other centered objectives. Saint Paul recognized he was a sinner but also recognized he was forgiven so we must allow ourselves to be loved and liberated by God.

Judas repented but did not accept the love of the Father and Jesus. He went out and killed himself. We can know we did wrong but that is just the first step to holiness. The most important step is recognizing that we are loved and accepting forgiveness. Peter is an example of repentance and forgiveness. In the boat with Jesus for the first time, the Lord tells Peter to lower his nets for a catch. Peter does it and catches all kinds of fish but then he is overcome by his sinfulness and tells the Lord to go away. The Lord does not go away but calls him to follow Him and be a fisher of men. Then Peter accepts forgiveness and mercy. We are called to accept forgiveness and mercy because with God all things are possible. Grace builds on nature and grace always comes first. The three persons of the trinity are love unlimited and are there for us 24/7. I must acknowledge that love and hold onto it.

Archbishop Aquila reminded the priests and all the faithful that we are called to live by the theological and cardinal virtues:

Virtues are gifts from God that lead us to live in a close relationship with him. Virtues are like habits. They need to be practiced; they can be lost if they are neglected. The three most important virtues are called theological virtues because they come from God and lead to God. The cardinal virtues are human virtues, acquired by education and good actions. Cardinal comes from cardo, the Latin word for hinge, meaning "that on which other things depend." The Theological Virtues are: faith, hope, charity. The Cardinal Virtues are: prudence, justice, fortitude, temperance.

God leads us to our dignity and we are called to call others to their dignity. Holiness is living Mercy. Feeding the hungry and clothing the naked. The demands of the gospel are real.

Archbishop Aquila then moved on to stressing the importance of the two great sacraments of discipleship the Eucharist and the sacrament of Reconciliation. We must keep our lamps lit. Eucharist and Reconciliation will help us keep the fire going. Those who think they commit no serious sins are the ones who have allowed their spiritual life to become luke-warm. Confession is so important to keep the fire going and to keep our lamps lit.

The Eucharist is the one sacrifice of Christ and the Eucharistic prayer is addressed to the Father. We share in the sacrifice to the Father. We are called to enter into the great doxology “Through him, and with him, and in him, O God, almighty Father, in Unity of the Holy Spirit, all glory and honor is yours, for ever and ever. Amen.” We are to carry each other in our hearts and carry all the people in our hearts as we celebrate the Eucharist. Reconciliation and the Holy Eucharist call us to holiness and give us the strength to lay down our life for the people.

In closing his homily at the Chrism Mass, Archbishop Aquila called us to become saints and to grow in holiness. He encouraged us to hold the truth of Jesus and keep our eyes fixed on Jesus who perfects our love. He called the priests to be men of holiness and prayer. We are to receive the love of the father and son living the Gospel each day. All things are possible with God. As Jesus told us “all this I told you that my joy maybe with you and your joy may be complete.” We are called to be the light of Christ in this pandemic.

In his love,

Fr. David