

## **Homily for Mass of Installation**

Praised be Jesus Christ, now and forever! It is with these words that I greet you as the new Bishop of the Diocese of Harrisburg and ask that you pray for me that all that I do may be pleasing to the Lord and always be directed as a work of praise to the Lord Jesus Christ.

I am deeply grateful to our Holy Father Pope Benedict XVI for his confidence in appointing me as the tenth Bishop of Harrisburg. I have assured him of my gratitude and promised him my loyalty, my prayers and my support as he continues his work of leading the Church as the Vicar of Christ.

I say a special word of thanks today to Archbishop Sambini, the Papal Nuncio to the United States, who is the representative of the Holy Father and who honors us with his presence here this afternoon. Archbishop, I thank you for the support you have given to me and continue to give to all the Bishops of the United States and I am especially grateful that you have taken the time to be with me and the Church in Harrisburg this afternoon. I assure you that the people of Harrisburg will keep you in our prayers as you continue the important work of representing the Holy Father in the United States.

I thank in a special way today Cardinal Rigali, the Metropolitan Archbishop of Philadelphia who ordained me a Bishop, is presiding at this installation ceremony and who I have been privileged to work with for the past 6 years as his Auxiliary Bishop. Your Eminence you have been a wonderful mentor and friend and have modeled what it means to be a good shepherd for one's flock. I am eternally grateful for all of your support through the years and I look forward to working closely with you as my Metropolitan Archbishop.

I am truly humbled by the presence of Cardinals Foley and Keeler, the other Archbishops and Bishops who have come to join in this celebration and all of the priests, deacons, consecrated men and women religious, family and friends and wonderful people of the Diocese of Harrisburg who are with us for this important moment in the life of the Church in Harrisburg.

I am privileged to celebrate this first Eucharist in this beautiful Cathedral of St. Patrick and to share with you some thoughts on the word of God that has been proclaimed in this liturgy. As you know the Eucharist is the center point of our Catholic faith. Our late Holy Father Pope John Paul II in the last letter that he wrote to the Church before he died entitled "Ecclesia de Eucharistia" reminded us that we are the Church of the Eucharist. It is in the Eucharist that we find our identity and our destiny. Our identity is the privilege of being sons and daughters of God. It is in the Eucharist that Jesus feeds us with His body and Blood so that He may live in us and we may live in Him and truly be God's people.

Our Holy Father pointed out that in the Eucharist all of space and time are brought together. In the Eucharist we are transported back to that moment in time when Jesus offered Himself on the cross for our sins and the sins of the whole world. When we assist at the Eucharist we have the great privilege of attaching ourselves to this unique sacrifice in such a way that we now become part of the only acceptable sacrifice to God our Father and thus are opened to communion and participation in the very life of God. In the Eucharist Jesus continues to give us a share in His divine life so that we have an eternal destiny and an eternal future. In feeding us with His body and blood we are given the grace necessary to live the Christian life as God intends.

I point this out this afternoon because I believe one of the challenges that I must confront as a Bishop in the Church today is the diminished appreciation of Catholics for the importance of the Sunday Eucharist in their lives. St. John Vianney, the patron saint of parish priests, often remarked to his people in Ars that if we truly understood the Eucharist and the great gift

that God was offering us we would not only seek it once a week but would long for it constantly.

It is in the Eucharist that we see the fulfillment of the promise Jesus made to His disciples when He ascended to the Father and assured them that He would be with them and with His Church until the end of time. It is important for all of us to understand that we do not have a God who is far distant from us but one who is very close to us and who desires to live in us. In doing so He calls us to help Him to build His kingdom. This is really the task and work of the Church in Harrisburg. God calls us to be His people here in this place at this time and this moment in history.

He asks us to not be afraid to live our lives based on the gospel values that Jesus teaches us. So often in the Scripture Jesus says to the disciples and to you and me today "Do not be afraid". This is the message that I bring as your new shepherd. Let us not be afraid to share our faith in the Lord Jesus with all of the people of the 15 counties of the Diocese of Harrisburg. Like St. Paul in his admonition to St. Timothy in our second reading for today's liturgy I ask that all of us stir into flame the gift God bestowed upon us in our baptism. It is the gift of the Holy Spirit that dwells in the hearts of all believers allowing us to truly be God's people. Paul points out that this spirit is not a cowardly spirit but rather one that makes us strong, loving and wise.

He also encourages us to be willing to bear our fair share of the hardships that come with living out the gospel. This is often a difficult message for us to hear and to understand because being a disciple of Jesus does entail a willingness to take up our cross and follow Him. This does not mean that we run around looking for hardships or crosses to bear. If we truly live the gospel we will find more than enough to keep us occupied.

We are living in a culture that often rejects the fact that there is a God who created us and who has established in His creation certain truths that

do not depend upon the will or the whim of the created. If we live by these truths we will find opposition but we cannot deny these truths. One of these is the right to life. We are a people who proclaim that God is the author of all life human and divine. We must be a people that respect human life from the moment of conception until natural death. We must not be timid about this truth and we must do all in our power to help our brothers and sisters in the world to grow in their appreciation of this truth.

We also live in a time when society would like to redefine the concept of family and of the institution of marriage that finds its origin in God and was established by God. It is God who willed that we be created male and female and that the two should become one flesh. In doing so He established a set purpose for our sexual faculties which are ordered to the intimate sharing of our very being with the other opening to a participation in the creative power of God in bringing about new life. To proclaim this truth today requires courage and strength. In doing so we face the potential for rejection just as the Lord Jesus encountered rejection in proclaiming the truth.

We must also be willing to follow the Lord in making reparation to God for our own sins and the sins of others. We can do this through our prayers and our good works. It is also important for us to recapture our appreciation for the wonderful sacrament of reconciliation. This sacrament that has fallen into disuse by so many of our people is a tragedy that needs to be corrected. In the sacrament of reconciliation our God desires to draw us away from the evil that is so detrimental to us and to restore us to the goodness that He has placed within each of us. In this sacrament we must realize that the Lord says to us what he said to the woman caught in adultery and was about to be put to death. After writing in the sand it was only she and the Lord. The Lord asked "is there no one here to condemn you". She answered, "Only you Lord". Jesus said "I do not condemn you but go and sin no more". What wonderful words to hear. I do not condemn you but go and sin no more. Why would we not want to hear these words for ourselves in the sacrament of reconciliation? It is also important to understand that during our earthly life Jesus is always our merciful savior generously offering his forgiveness unconditionally for those who will acknowledge their sins. At the end of our life when we pass through the doorway of death Jesus must become the just

judge when He must be true to Himself and meet out justice. It behooves us to claim His mercy now especially by frequent use of the sacrament of reconciliation.

While we are speaking about sins and the mercy of God I do want to address for a moment the terrible sin of clergy sexual abuse that has occurred in the Church in recent years. To those who are victims especially here in Harrisburg I express my deepest sympathy for what you have endured. In the name of the Church I apologize for this terrible injustice that was committed against you. The way that it was dealt with in the Church was wrong and we are sorry. I assure you, the victims, that you have my deepest love and concern and I will do all in my power to see that no such tragedy occurs again in the Church. I do have an image that I want to convey to you and it is the image of the Sorrowful Mother Mary holding her battered and beaten Son after the terrible crucifixion that he underwent at the hands of ruthless people. Though He was innocent He was defiled. Please know I desire to hold you as Mary held her innocent son. I pray that in time you will experience the Resurrection in your own life and that your wounds will be healed.

In this liturgy we are using the Mass of the Blessed Virgin Mary, Image and Mother of the Church. It is especially appropriate that during this Marian Year in the Diocese that we should contemplate and look to Mary as the model for our life and as the loving Mother that will journey with us as she journeyed with her Son, Jesus throughout His life. As we heard in the Gospel for this Mass it was Jesus who gave Mary to us as our mother. She is the one who brought Jesus to the world and she is the one who continues to direct us to her Son. She is a great intercessor for us and throughout the course of my life I have been the beneficiary of her intercession and her help more times than I can possibly count.

We also know that Mary is honored under the title of Our Lady of Hope. She teaches us that we must always be a people of hope and always trust that our loving God will sustain and accomplish His work in us if we will only remain faithful to Him and to His promises. It is my prayer that we the

people of the Church in Harrisburg will always be a people full of hope. We live in a world today where there are many individuals who have lost hope. We know this because we see in the media stories of suicides, violence, drug and alcohol abuse and so many other stories that can drain us of our zest for life. There are many in our own area that suffer as a result of the economic downturn and can despair that things will ever turn around or get better. I want you to know that we are not abandoned or alone. The Lord is with us. He will accomplish great things in us if we allow Him to work in and through us. Let us be a sign of hope for all the people who live within the confines of the Diocese of Harrisburg. May they see in us a bright light shining in the darkness that will lead them as Mary did to the God who never fails us.

Before I conclude I am going to deliver a short message to all of those in our Diocese who speak Spanish.

Queridos Hermanos en Cristo,

Doy gracias al Señor Dios por su bondad conmigo.

Doy gracias porque me ha puesto en esta diócesis de Harrisburg.

En los evangelios Jesús repite muchas veces

“No tengan miedo.”

El quiere decirnos que El siempre está con nosotros.

Yo sé que ustedes son un pueblo de Fe

en nuestro Señor.

Estoy contento hoy día porque soy su Obispo.

Vamos a caminar juntos con fe en el Señor.

Vamos a vivir nuestra Fe todos los días.

Juntos vamos a proclamar a todos

nuestra fe en el amor a nuestro Dios.

Le doy gracias a Dios por haber sido elegido

para servir como su Obispo.

Les pido que vivan su fe todos los dias.

Sean ejemplos de nuestro Senor Jesus.

Les pido que sigan acercandose a Jesus  
todos los domingos en la Eucaristia.

Alli esta nuestra fuente de vida.

Tambien le pedimos a Maria nuestra Madre

que siga caminando con nosotros

aqui en Harrisburg.

Ella es nuestro modelo de Fe.

Ella nos ayuda a conocer bien a su Hijo Jesus

Y intercede siempre por nosotros.

Tambien les pido que todos los dias

recen por su Obispo

Y les prometo hacer lo mismo por ustedes

Gracias por su calurosa bienvenida!

Que el Senor los bendiga siempre.

Finally my good people in the Diocese of Harrisburg, I ask you to pray for me that I may be a good shepherd after the heart of Jesus. Pray that together we may be good builders of the Kingdom of God here in Harrisburg. Pray that we will have the courage to invite others to embrace our faith in Jesus. Pray that I may be able to encourage those who have grown lax in their faith to rediscover the great gift that God has given to us in His Son Jesus and the great treasure that He has left us in the Eucharist. It is my prayer that all of us will look to Mary as the model for our life and that Jesus will always be at the center of all that we say and do.