

## **Sunday 25 -A**

### **Installation Mass of Msgr. Mark Hagemoen**

Holy Name of Jesus Church

18 September 2011

Dear Monsignor Hagemoen, brother priests, sisters, faculty, students, benefactors and friends of the Catholic Colleges on UBC campus:

#### ***Introduction***

The Installation of Monsignor Mark Hagemoen as the eleventh Principal and Vice-Chancellor of St. Mark's College and the third President of Corpus Christi College fittingly begins with this celebration of the Eucharist. Our worship always involves giving thanks to Almighty God for the gifts he has showered upon us in Christ, primary of which is that of Redemption. But Holy Mass also provides the occasion to give thanks for the admittedly smaller, but nonetheless life-giving, gifts through which we come to know the divine plan of salvation. Here, I believe, we can situate the world of higher education, a privileged instrument in God's hands through which we can serve him by contributing to the building up of the Church and the world as he would have us do.

And this afternoon, at this Eucharist, we not only give thanks that Monsignor Hagemoen has selflessly assumed the responsibility of heading the Colleges but we also implore the Holy Spirit to grant him the wisdom, understanding and right judgment to do so with fidelity to

the great Catholic tradition of higher education, with a keen eye to the signs of the times, and with a genuine spirit of service to the faculty, students, families and public who will look to him. During this Mass we commend him to Christ the Teacher and to Mary Seat of Wisdom so that he will accomplish the task which lies before him.

The parable in today's Gospel teaches at least two lessons, not least of which is the generosity of God who rewards us from his boundless mercy and not because we have a claim upon him. The word "entitlement" does not exist in the vocabulary of the Kingdom of God. Human logic is limited but the mercy and grace of God know no bounds. God doesn't act by our standards. What we heard in this afternoon's First Reading from the Prophet Isaiah says it best: "For my thoughts are not your thoughts, nor are your ways my ways, says the Lord. For as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways and my thoughts than your thoughts" (Is 55:8-9). God's graces and blessings are boundless, and each person receives his or her own share.<sup>1</sup> We are not the arbiters of God's love for his people.

But I would like, rather, to reflect a little more on the opening verses of the parable, for it can readily be applied – as parables are intended to do – to our celebration today.

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<sup>1</sup> Cf. Thomas Rosica, "Are You Envious Because I Am Generous? Biblical Reflection for 25th Sunday in Ordinary Time A."

The Gospel parable sets before our eyes the Lord's vast vineyard and those whom he calls and sends out to labour in it. The vineyard is, of course, the whole world (cf. Mt 13:38), entrusted to us to be transformed according to God's plan in light of the arrival of his Kingdom. But let us narrow this a little: the vineyard is this corner of the world called British Columbia, and perhaps even more particularly the Lower Mainland which coincides with the Archdiocese of Vancouver.

And in this vineyard, when we look at it through the lens of higher education, many challenges confront us, not least of which are those of a secularism which would constrict the voice of religion to the private sphere, excluding it from the public square and the world of higher education, of a reductionist view of the human person who is viewed primarily as a consumer of goods and the university as merely a kind of technical training to enter the work force, and the abandonment of reasonable discourse complementary to faith in favour of a power politics which altogether abandons the search for truth. *This*, however, is the vineyard which the Lord has given us to cultivate; *this* is the field, and no other, where we are called to fulfill our mission to be the "salt of the earth" and the "light of the world" (cf. Mt 5:13-14).

If the Catholic higher education provided by the Colleges is to continue to bear fruit and to flourish, it must be the work of many

labourers. The founders can perhaps be compared to those who first dedicated themselves to this great project, chosen at the beginning and still present through the vision they inspired. But the parable tells us of others – those of us here in this church – who have come afterwards. And what does the Lord say to us, about our role in ensuring the Colleges’ flourishing? “When [the landowner] he went out about nine o’clock, – and then again at noon, mid-afternoon and early evening – he saw others standing idle in the marketplace; and he said to them, ‘You also go into the vineyard’”(Mt 20:3-4).

From that distant day the call of the Lord Jesus, “You also go into my vineyard too,” resounds in the life of the Church and in the life of all those associated with the Catholic Colleges. It is a call addressed to all of us, without exception. Each one of you has been personally called by the Lord.<sup>2</sup> To do what? “To take an active, conscientious and responsible part in the mission of the Church”<sup>3</sup> and in the mission of higher education in our Archdiocese. In preaching to the people, Pope St. Gregory the Great comments: “make sure that you are indeed the Lord’s labourers. Each person should take into account what he does

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<sup>2</sup> Cf. Blessed John Paul II, *Christifideles Laici*, 2.

<sup>3</sup> Blessed John Paul II, *Christifideles Laici*, 3.

and consider if he is labouring in the vineyard of the Lord.”<sup>4</sup>

Because each of us is unique and with his or her own particular talents, resources and interests, we each offer different gifts in cultivating our vineyard. “The landowner does not tolerate, as it were, unemployment: he wants everyone to be employed in his vineyard.”<sup>5</sup> Providing Catholic higher education is a common work of the Church and calls urgently for our action and involvement. As Blessed John Paul II once wrote, “If lack of commitment is always unacceptable, the present time renders it even more so. It is not permissible for anyone to remain idle.”<sup>6</sup>

Moreover, no matter when or how we are being called – at what hour of the day – we should also remember that being called to share in a great endeavour, one that comes forth “from the heart of the Church,” is not only a privilege but also a reward. To cite the words of the Holy Father: “to be able to work in the Lord’s vineyard, to put oneself at his service, to collaborate in his work, is in itself a priceless recompense that repays every effort.”

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<sup>4</sup> St. Gregory the Great, *Hom. In Evang.* 1, XIX, 2: *PL* 76, 1155.

<sup>5</sup> Benedict XVI, *Angelus* (21 September 2008).

<sup>6</sup> Blessed John Paul II, *Christifideles Laici*, 3.

## ***Conclusion***

For us and on our behalf, Father Mark has begun tilling the soil of our vineyard which has already produced fine BC wine in its many alumni. But he needs us, as the Lord calls us, not to be idle but to set our hands to plough together and so build great colleges of Catholic learning and life which will redound to the glory of God, the building up of the Church and the welfare of the world in which we live.

As we continue this Eucharist, let us pray that the Lord will bless the new Principal and President of the Colleges with the graces he needs and that he will strengthen our resolve to be partners in the mission of being vigorous labourers in his vineyard whose well-being he has entrusted to our hands. And may the good work which he has begun in us come to completion in the Day of Christ Jesus Our Lord. Amen.

✦ J. Michael Miller, CSB  
Archbishop of Vancouver