

Easter 5: Tuesday

Holy Childhood Mission Day Mass

St. Patrick's Church, Vancouver

1 May 2018

Dear brother priests, Sisters, teachers, and dear boys and girls of the Catholic schools of the Archdiocese of Vancouver:

Introduction

How good God is to bring us together this morning to celebrate together annual Holy Childhood Mission Day Mass. You are all a great blessing to the Church. I am so happy to be with all of you this morning. It is always a great pleasure to see you and to thank you from to my heart for all you are doing for boys and girls around the world who are in need.

Above all, as St. Paul wrote in his Letter to the early Christians in the city of Colossae, we are “giving thanks to God the Father through our Lord Jesus Christ” (cf. Col 3:17). We know we can do good things for others because God himself stirs up this desire in us. In fact, when we do good to others it is a blessing not only for those who benefit from our kindness but also a blessing for us. Why? Because we have heard his voice in our hearts and have responded generously.

This morning I wish to express my profound gratitude to Sister Mary Ellen Burns who, for so many years, has dedicated herself to the apostolate of the Holy Childhood in our Archdiocese. Sister, as you begin your retirement, let me say that you have been a source of many

blessings. We shall miss your organization of the Holy Childhood here in Vancouver, but know that our prayers are with you. to all of us! I would also like to say “thank you” to you, dear principals, teachers and parents, who see to it that the students in your schools share in the work of the Holy Childhood.

This association is vitally important to helping develop in our young people a missionary heart. Because of your influence and support, they become aware of the wider Church and world. As St. Paul says, we are “one body” (Col 3:15), We are all members of the great family of God as his children.

By working with the Holy Childhood, you keep alive in us that, no matter in what country we live in, we are all part of the one Church that Jesus founded. All of us by our Baptism, and some of you older ones, also by your Confirmation, have a mission: a particular task given to us by Jesus. And that mission is to bring the Good News of Jesus to others. The Good News is that God loves every person, regardless of their religion, the language they speak, they country they come from, or the colour of their skin. Jesus loves each one of us personally, and we are called to love one another just as Jesus loves us.

As you know, the motto of the Holy Childhood is “children helping children.” This Society recognizes that children, even when they are very young, can reach out to other children around the world.

Two weeks ago I was in Lebanon, a country of 4 million people located between Israel and Syria, They have received 1.5 million refugees from Iraq and Syria, mothers and fathers and countless children who have had to leave their homes because of war. I was with another organization, the Catholic Near East Welfare Association, to visit the projects that it sponsors, among which were many for the refugees. I saw many children in camps who lack homes, proper schools and nourishment and health care. It was heart breaking.

I mention this because the Holy Childhood Association is also there and in similar situations in other countries to help the children. They depend on you – on us – and it is so reassuring to know that you have not forgotten the children in orphanages, in the camps, in homes for the disabled, and those living on the streets. You are there with them by your generosity and by prayers. I know they appreciate what you are doing for them, even if often they can't express that to you themselves. But, of course, God sees and knows what you do, and he is pleased with you. May he continue to bless you for your kindness!

Feast of St. Joseph the Worker

Today the Church is celebrating the feast of St. Joseph the Worker. Joseph was the husband of Mary, Jesus' Mother, and the foster father of Jesus himself.

We know from the Gospel that Joseph was a carpenter (cf. Mt

13:55). He had to earn a living just as your fathers do to provide for Jesus and Mary. He was a “just man” whom God placed over the Holy Family. “From Joseph’s strong and fatherly example Jesus learned the virtues of a manly piety, fidelity to one’s word, integrity and hard work.”¹ Jesus would have learned so much from him: above all, how to be a man with all that entails in learning to be strong, yet gentle; hard-working, yet prayerful; to be kind, attentive and willing to do difficult things for the sake of others.

The first “holy childhood” was that of Jesus. Like us, being “holy” for him was not lived in spectacular ways – he might not have been the best at games in the village of Nazareth – but in doing the everyday things he was asked to do by Mary and Joseph with obedience and love. You, too, are called to live your holy childhood in the same way.

Conclusion

As we continue this Mass, let us thank our good Lord for giving us our families, and let us promise to do our part so that our family, like that of Jesus, Mary and Joseph will, each in its own way, be a holy family.

✠ J. Michael Miller, CSB
Archbishop of Vancouver

¹ Benedict XVI, Homily, Nazareth (14 May 2009).