

Friday: Ordinary 28-B

St. Francis de Sales School Mass

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19 October 2018

Dear Father Smith, Father Egirious, teachers, staff and students of St. Francis de Sales School; dear brothers and sisters in Christ:

Introduction

It is a great pleasure for me to offer with you, the school community, this Holy Mass during my visit to your Parish. It began last evening and continues until Sunday morning. I have already met with several groups, and I'm looking forward to meeting many more during my days here with your Parish family.

Boys and girls: you are so blessed to be students of your superb Catholic school. I hope that you are learning to love Jesus during your days here. There is no greater gift that your school can give you than to come to know Jesus and to become his friend and follower.

In the First Reading for today's Mass, the Apostle St. Paul, wrote to the Christians of Ephesus, a city in today's Turkey. He told them how fortunate they were to have received "the gospel of their salvation" (cf. Eph 1:13) which Jesus proclaimed. And you, too, like all of us here, have received this Good News from Jesus Christ.

At the heart of this Good News – and why it is called "good news" – is the message of God's love for us, his children, which Jesus preached

during his time on earth. The people loved to hear him talk. The Bible today tells us that the crowd “had gathered by the thousands”; there were so many people that “they trampled on one another” (Lk 12:1). That’s a lot of enthusiasm!

Jesus told the people that we have a loving Father in heaven who always cares for us. In today’s Gospel from St. Luke Jesus uses two beautiful images to help us understand how much God loves us, and how he knows each one of us personally.

First he mentions that if God cares even for sparrows – so cheap and insignificant that they are sold for two small coins, maybe \$10 in today’s way of counting – how much more does he care for his people who are worth more than many sparrows! Then he explains his tender love with another saying: “even the hairs of your head are all counted” (cf. Lk 12:6-7). Just think of that! God knows every hair on your head. But, much more importantly, he knows YOU, and loves YOU.

Jesus also cured the sick and performed many miracles so that we would come to trust in him and believe his message.

But Jesus did even more than this! He didn’t just talk about love. He showed, he proved his love for us. On the first Good Friday, he died on the Cross to forgive our sins, and on Easter Sunday he rose from the dead as a sign that he conquered even death. Jesus is alive!

And because he is alive, he is with us every minute of the day. He

holds in his hands, and he never lets go of us. Even when we turn away from him by doing bad things, by sinning, he offers us forgiveness. You know that every time you go to Confession, Jesus is there to forgive you. In fact, he is the one who makes you want to say your sorry.

He shows his love even more by inviting you to share in his life. He nourishes you every time you receive him in Holy Communion.

I am so glad that you are learning about Jesus, the stories of his life, and about the sacraments he left to us in the Church, about what he said about how we are to live by loving all our brothers and sisters, especially those who are neglected or sick or live far away in poverty.

Your school is a special place where you are being taught to become saints; that is “friends of Jesus.” In the Gospel we just heard read, Jesus calls his followers “my friends” (Lk 12:4). That’s who we are! The school’s goal, then, is to help the boys and girls to imitate Jesus to become holy, and to be his friends.

Teachers

I would like to thank all your teachers who accompany you on your walk of faith. And also those parents who are here; thank you for tending to the spiritual formation of your children of whom you are their first shepherd.

Dear teachers: you are carrying out a truly supernatural vocation and mission by teaching your students. Not only are a group that is

professionally competent, you are spiritual guides to the boys and girls entrusted to your care. My gratitude to you for your ministry of educating the young boys and girls of this Parish is boundless.

Conclusion

We are now going to continue this Mass. We wait for Jesus to become present in the bread and wine that become his Body and Blood. And most importantly, we wait for him to come to us and nourish us with the great gift of Holy Communion.