

MEMORIAL OF ST. JOHN MARY VIANNEY
COURAGE CONFERENCE
MUNDELEIN, ILLINOIS
AUGUST 4, 2011

Ez 2: 17-21
Ps 117: 1bc, 2
Mt 9: 35-10:1

HOMILY

Praised be Jesus Christ, now and for ever. Amen.

The brief passage from the *Gospel according to Saint Matthew*, to which we have just listened, gives eloquent expression to the pastoral charity of Our Lord Jesus Christ. Christ visited “all the cities and villages,”¹ without exception. He proclaimed the truth of God’s immeasurable and unceasing love of man and showed the divine love in action by “healing every disease and every infirmity.”² In short, He was filled with compassion for the crowds, “because they were harassed and helpless, like sheep without a shepherd.”³ What is more, he urged the disciples to pray “the Lord of the harvest [God the Father] to send out laborers into His harvest,”⁴ and He then called the Apostles, the Twelve, to be those laborers, his co-workers, in the high priestly office of pastoral charity, in the offering of His very life for the sanctification of the people during their days on earth, and their eternal salvation in the Kingdom of Heaven, the destiny of their earthly pilgrimage.

Christ called the Apostles to share in the mission of salvation, which He, the only-begotten Son, had received from God the Father. Calling the Apostles, He “gave them authority over unclean spirits, to cast them out, and to heal every disease and every infirmity.”⁵ In the great mystery of divine love, Christ gave to the Apostles the saving power which was His as God the Son, so that His ministry would continue always in the Church, at every time and in every place, without exception. At the Last Supper, during which He instituted the Holy Eucharist, He also instituted the Holy Priesthood, consecrating the Apostles and their successors to act in His person, making present in every time and place the saving grace of His Passion, Death and Resurrection.

We see in the public ministry of Christ, especially in His calling of the Apostles to share in His saving work, the fulfillment of the mission of the Lord, communicated through the Prophet Ezekiel: “Son of man, I have made you a watchman for the house of Israel; whenever you hear a word from My mouth, you shall them give warning from Me.”⁶ The word of truth coming from the mouth of the Lord communicates to man the way of eternal salvation. It is a saving word which is connaturally accompanied by miracles, the Lord’s saving deeds.

Man remains free to reform his life, once he has heard the word of the Lord, but the “son of Man” is responsible to announce God’s word always and everywhere. If he does not announce the word of truth, the eternal death of the man who dies “in his iniquity,” because he has not heard the

¹ *Mt* 9:35.

² *Mt* 9:35.

³ *Mt* 9:36.

⁴ *Mt* 9:38.

⁵ *Mt* 10:1.

⁶ *Ez* 3:17.

word of truth, will be on the conscience of the “son of Man.”⁷ In the same way, if the “son of Man” warns “the righteous man not to sin, and he does not sin, he shall surely live, because he took warning; and the [son of Man] will have saved [his] life.”⁸ Our Lord Himself and the Twelve, in communion with Him, fulfill perfectly the command of God to the Prophet Ezekiel. Through the ministry of the Twelve, and their successors, the Roman Pontiff, the Bishops in communion with him, and the priests, their co-workers, Christ never ceases to exercise his pastoral charity on behalf of all men, announcing the truth of God, which is unfailingly accompanied by His saving works.

Today, in a particular way, we rejoice in the priestly ministry of Saint John Mary Vianney (8 May 1776 – 4 August 1859), as we celebrate day of his death in 1859. In the priestly life and ministry of the Curé of Ars, we witness, in an extraordinary way, Christ’s unceasing proclamation of divine truth, accompanied by His works of divine love. Having been sacramentally configured to Christ the Head and Shepherd of the flock in every time and place, Saint John Mary Vianney was sent as parish priest to Ars, a village known for the coldness of the Catholic faith and practice, on the part of the parishioners. Having encountered directly the lack of participation in the sacramental life of the Church, on the part of the faithful, and the many resulting moral difficulties, the Curé of Ars relied upon Christ the High Priest, the Chief Shepherd, to transform his parish.

By centering his priestly ministry in the daily celebration of the Holy Mass and by spending long hours in prayer before the Most Blessed Sacrament reposed in the tabernacle of the parish church, he drew countless souls to Christ alive for us in the Church. Witnessing the intimacy of their parish priest with our Eucharistic Lord, the faithful desired the same intimacy. Once attracted to the Real Presence of Our Lord in the Sacred Host, they became deeply conscious of their need to encounter Our Lord in the Sacrament of Penance for the confession and absolution of their sins.

The demands of the priestly office for Saint John Mary Vianney were tremendous. Announcing the truth to the faithful who did not want to hear it required every ounce of the Saint’s energy, but he recognized the Lord’s call, knowing that his duty to teach and heal remained, whether or not he received a positive response. On more than one occasion, he was tempted to flee Ars, in order to find a place in which he could pray without all of the demands of pastoral charity. But, by God’s grace, he remained faithful and, through, with and in Christ, countless souls were saved, not only in Ars but in the many parts from which the faithful came to receive the priestly ministrations of Christ from the heart and hands of Saint John Mary Vianney.

Opening the 2011 Annual Courage Conference, dedicated to the memory of Father John F. Harvey, O.S.F.S. (14 April 1918 – 27 December 2011), Founding Director of Courage, we also thank God for His loving care, His pastoral charity, exercised, on behalf of brothers and sisters who suffer from the homosexual condition, through the heart and hands of Father Harvey. Father Harvey accepted a priestly ministry which many either ignored or avoided. He faced serious misunderstandings and endured years of questioning, on the part of those from whom he rightly expected support. But, through, with and in Christ, he remained steadfast to the end, expending his every energy on behalf of the flock entrusted to his care. Our privileged time together, during these days, offers us the occasion to contemplate how Christ has loved us and cared for us, announcing to us the divine truth accompanied by the works of divine charity, through the priestly life and ministry of Father Harvey.

To His glorious priestly Heart, Christ unites the hearts of His priests whom He calls to act in His person, as Head and Shepherd of the flock, for the salvation of all men. He purifies and sanctifies their hearts with sacramental grace, so that His pastoral charity may never be lacking, at any time or in any place. We thank Christ today, in a most special way, for his priests, Saint John Mary Vianney and our beloved Father John F. Harvey of the Oblates of Saint Francis de Sales. We ask the Curé of

⁷ Ez 3:18.

⁸ Ez 3:21.

Ars to intercede for us and for the Annual Courage Conference, so that it may faithfully and generously promote the work to which Father Harvey dedicated himself with an undivided heart. Surely, Father Harvey is accompanying with his priestly love and prayers.

The priestly Heart of Jesus, pierced by the Roman soldier's spear on Calvary, is the glorious Heart of Jesus, seated at the right hand of the Father, ever open to receive us and never ceasing to beat with love of us and of all men, without exception. Let us now lift up our hearts to the glorious pierced Heart of Jesus through His Eucharistic Sacrifice. One in heart with His Sacred Heart, let us pray, in a special way, for our priests who serve the Courage and EnCourage Apostolates. Let us lift them up in prayer to the glorious pierced Heart of Jesus, in which Father Harvey steadfastly rested his heart, so that from the Heart of Jesus our priests may bring to us the truth and love which heals and strengthens us all.

Heart of Jesus, King and Center of all hearts, have mercy on us.

Our Lady of Guadalupe, Mother of America and Star of the New Evangelization, pray for us.

Saint John Mary Vianney, pray for us.

Raymond Leo Cardinal Burke

Prefect of the Supreme Tribunal of the Apostolic Signatura