

Readings For Mass:

Joel 2:23a, 26 – 3:1-3a	Delight and rejoice in your God!
Romans 8:26-27	Holy Spirit intercedes for the holy ones according to God's will
Luke 10:21-24	Jesus rejoiced in the Holy Spirit!

Good morning! And welcome!

Today, as the Archdiocese of Seattle, we embark upon a new moment to renew our local church, the people of God in our faith in Jesus Christ – the Risen One who makes all things new. At the same time, we begin a significant process of restructuring which at its core is an answer to the call to discern by God's Holy Spirit how we are to be Church today – how we are to live our faith today.

Present here today is the largest gathering of pastoral leaders of the Archdiocese of Seattle in decades. At first glance, you may think that I have called you here, which is only partially true. As we pray in the Eucharistic Prayer (III) it is God who has brought us together: "O Lord, ... you never cease to gather a people to yourself."

Recognizing that it is the Lord, God who gathers us; that it is Christ who forms us into the holy people of God, we take this moment to be reminded of the privilege that we share to be in the service of Christ. The words we just heard from the prophet Joel give expression to the deepest reality of our hearts: "Delight and rejoice in your God!" Jesus himself lived in this fashion as we heard in the Gospel: "Jesus rejoiced in the Holy Spirit!" And finally, from St. Paul's letter to the Romans we are encouraged to hear again that "Holy Spirit intercedes for the holy ones according to God's will."

It is important for us as pastoral leaders to live out of these realities as we answer the call to reinvigorate the faith of our people and to re-envision the manner in which we live that faith. It is far too easy, perhaps even too common today to focus on the many challenges and difficulties present in our world and even in the Church. If the challenges and difficulties are all

we focus on, then we will never rise to effectively carry out the mission Christ has entrusted to us.

Our primary task as pastoral leaders is to “keep our eyes fixed on Christ,” (Hebrews 12:2) and to be docile to the promptings and guidance of the Holy Spirit as together we seek to know and accomplish the will of God. Luke’s Gospel reminds us of the great privilege that is ours to know Christ, to know him, to see him, to hear his voice, and to follow him in self-less service. Again, we can at times become solely focused on the cost of discipleship, but today we must know how blessed we are to be called his disciples.

It seems to me that we ourselves are in need of a re-evangelization, to be more and more convinced of the power of the Risen Christ who has already conquered sin and death, indeed the world. Then, and only then are we capable of being living witnesses to the resurrection of Christ.

Our Opening Prayer this morning states well what we ask of God: “may your divine grace, which was at work when the Gospel was first proclaimed, now spread through the hearts of those who believe in you.” We need to believe in the power of God’s Word to transform us and all of God’s people.

Allow me to share a few quotes from the Second Vatican Council from the Pastoral Constitution *Gaudium et Spes*:

The Church is not motivated by an earthly ambition but is interested in one thing only – to carry on the work of Christ under the guidance of the Holy Spirit, for he came into the world to bear witness to the truth, (John 18:37) to save and not to judge, (John 3:17) to serve and not be served. (Matthew 20:28), (No. 3)

The people of God believes that it is led by the Spirit of the Lord who fills the whole world. Moved by that faith it tries to discern in the events, the needs, and the longings which it shares with other men (and women) of our time, what may be genuine signs of the presence or of the purpose of God. For faith throws a new light on all things and

makes known the full ideal which God has set for (all of humanity) man, thus guiding the mind towards solutions that are fully human. (No. 11)

For it is the function of the Church, led by the Holy Spirit Who renews and purifies her ceaselessly,(17) to make God the Father and His Incarnate Son present and in a sense visible. This result is achieved chiefly by the witness of a living and mature faith, namely, one trained to see difficulties clearly and to master them. (No. 21)

These teachings from the Council Fathers tell us much about how we are to engage this present moment of renewing the faith. Our Catholic faith begins with the person of Jesus Christ, and Christ is therefore our point of origin as we seek to renew and re-envision the Church today. Please allow me to share another quote, this one from a book entitled Disarming Beauty, by Julian Carron:

In Jesus Christ, “the Mystery entered history, becoming humanity’s companion, offering himself as an answer to the human need for happiness: whoever follows him will receive a hundredfold and will inherit eternal life. \* People of today will take an interest in Christianity if it is able to keep this promise and thus break them free from the lethargy in which they are trapped. Christianity is called to show its truth on the terrain of reality. If those who come into contact with it do not experience the newness that it promises, they will certainly be disappointed.” (pp. 59-60)

Carron goes on further to say:

Christianity is therefore faced with a human reality whose only adequate explanation is the imposing living presence of Christ, who, by the power of his Spirit, generates the Christian communities that will make him present in history. It cannot be reduced to an organization, even if from the beginning there appears to have been one, or to a pure inner inspiration, because from the beginning it is a sociologically identifiable reality, one that would not have existed if the risen Christ had not touched each of them, one by one, with his living presence. (pp. 65-66)

So my friends this is our task. To embody the risen Christ. To make him credible to the people of Western Washington, by the way we live our faith, by the way we incarnate Christ as Church as his body the mystical body of Christ.

May this celebration of the Eucharist and the power of the pascal mystery of the risen Christ bring to us as we now go forth to lead and reinvision this local church together as partners in Christ, as partners of his Gospel.