

**Archbishop Timothy P. Broglio, J.C.D.**  
**VI Sunday of Easter "A"**  
**Memorial Mass**



Last Tuesday the opportunity to celebrate the Eucharist and visit some of those responsible for the VA Medical Center in San Juan, PR was mine. The link to the visit of Peter and John to Samaria was not lost. From the beginnings of the Church, the Apostles and their successors visit the faith communities to celebrate confirmation and support our sisters and brothers in their daily living of the faith.

As we celebrate in this magnificent shrine to our Blessed Mother, Bishop Spencer is gathered with the sick and other military from around the world at Lourdes, Bishop Buckon is in Alaska, and Bishop Coyle is preparing for a pastoral visit to the Naval Station at Guantanamo Bay.

The liturgy this afternoon calls us to meditate on the consolidation and maturation of our Easter joy expressed in the dissemination of the Gospel, the depth of love and the signs of the Spirit in our midst.

As I mentioned, in the Acts of the Apostles St. Luke teaches us about openness to the guidance of the Holy Spirit, whose fullness is continually given to the Church in the sacrament of confirmation. The constant journeying of the Auxiliary Bishops and me is also to impart this gift in the context of a pastoral visit to the faithful entrusted to the spiritual care of this global archdiocese. What a blessing it is to meet so many committed men and women and their families and to offer them the uniqueness of the sacramental life of the Church!

We never lose the notion of community which gathers us this afternoon. Fundamentally, this celebration charges us to remember those who made the ultimate sacrifice for the values and safety of our Nation. We think of those who dramatically died on a battlefield, but also of those who succumbed to old age or bear the marks of battle in body and spirit and those who care for them. In a particular way we pray for the repose of the soul of Bishop José Madera, who passed away earlier this year. We also recommit ourselves to the families who lost loved ones or who care for those who still suffer the cost of war.

The Eucharist is not bound by time or space and so we are one with those who participate in the International Military Pilgrimage in Lourdes and those who worship in the 153 Medical Centers of the Department for Veterans Affairs and on military installations across the globe. Those who put their lives on the line in times of need merit our respect and the assurance of adequate spiritual care.

As we celebrate the Easter victory we also raise a courageous prayer for peace. Someday soon may those with differences learn to sit down, dialogue, and find lasting solutions. The Eucharistic Sacrifice places us squarely in the presence of the Crucified One, victorious over sin and death. His loving commitment helps us to be faithful and to move forward in the face of opposition. We renew our commitment, despite the cost.

Both the first and second readings remind us of the reality of persecution in the primitive Church. It allowed for the dissemination of Gospel both in geographic and ethnic extension, but also in depth. Can we gather this afternoon without remembering the drama of believers in the Middle East, the prohibition of religious freedom in Saudi Arabia, or others for whom participation at Mass is a luxury? Those who are faithful have always considered the price of fidelity and determined what is important. We also pray for them this afternoon.

The Apostles learned very soon that the Christian message is universal, not limited by culture, language, or birth. The great missionary efforts of believers began with the persecution of the Greek-speaking faithful. The Way also reached Samaria and the clear evidence of the authenticity of the Samaritan response is great joy. We attempt to relive that experience throughout Paschal Season. The early community was charismatic, open to growth and a variety of expressions. However, the Jerusalem community remained the norm and mirror.

The liturgical year calls us to deepen our experience of the Lord so as to grow in our knowledge and love. Pray for an increase in chaplains so that our men and women in uniform and their families can experience the unique mystery of the Eucharist.

For love is not merely a private affair: I love God. Love of God only has meaning when that love and belief have an effective expression in our actions. There can be no dichotomy between belief and action. Before the Regina Caeli this morning, Pope Francis reminded us that “every day we must learn the art of loving.”<sup>1</sup> Jesus makes that very clear in this Gospel passage. We profess love of a Lord who laid down His life for us. How appropriate that the annual Memorial Mass offers the occasion to conclude the archdiocesan process in the Cause for the Canonization of Father Vincent Capodanno.

He clearly knew the value of his priesthood and he willingly laid down his life so that others might have the benefit of the gifts he brought. Ray Harton will never forget Father Capodanno’s encouraging “Stay quiet, Marine. You will be OK”, but neither will any of us who have known that commitment repeated so often by a priest in the military.

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<sup>1</sup> Pope Francis, address before the Regina Caeli, 21.V.17. “Ogni giorno si deve imparare l'arte di amare”.

Obviously, this Sunday's liturgy already looks forward to the celebration of Pentecost in two weeks. We depend on the gift of the Holy Spirit and we see Him at work in the Church. He is the other Advocate promised by the Lord in the Gospel. He is the One imparted to the community of Samaria in the first reading, a classic text for confirmation, which builds on the first proclamation of the Gospel.

The word "you" in these passages is always plural. The Spirit is given to the Church: received in community and exercised in community. That is also so vital for our lives of faith. Even gifts given to individuals are always given in the context of a community. The great artistry at work in the completion of the mosaics in the great dome of this basilica is a testimony to the importance of using God-given gifts and talents to build up the Body of Christ, to witness without ceasing to the call to holiness and its response.

In the Pentecost event the Church is "called to energize the world until the end of time."<sup>2</sup> St. Cyril of Jerusalem taught that "the Spirit comes to enlighten the mind first of the one who receives Him, and then, through him, the minds of others, as well."<sup>3</sup>

A local news station indicated that the number of organized protests in the Capital District is on the increase. I never fail to think that protestors can protest, because others keep watch, run the risks, defend our liberties, and die to preserve those rights we hold dear. Today, dear sisters and brothers, we pause in prayer to thank them for that commitment and to give thanks that we enjoy certain God-given rights.

We can discuss many things and even disagree as long as we never forget that every human person is created in the image and likeness of God and merits respect. When that relationship is effective and healthy we can indeed give the reason for our hope as Peter suggests in the Second Reading. Indeed the response is given "with gentleness and reverence". "Those are the typical characteristics of the person who has deep convictions and is neither afraid to have them challenged nor does he need to impose them with force or defend them with disdain for those who believe or think differently."<sup>4</sup>

The acting Director of the VA in San Juan, Puerto Rico told me of his efforts to care for the aging population that frequents the same medical center. Commitment and genuine concern should always motivate our actions. In that way the words of the Gospel come alive and "you will realize that I am in my Father and you are in Me and I in you."

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<sup>2</sup> Peter Vaghi, *Meeting God in the Upper Room*, p.97

<sup>3</sup> As quoted in Vaghi *op. cit.*, p.101.

<sup>4</sup> Bishop Coletti cited in *L'Osservatore Romano*.

