

Archbishop Timothy P. Broglio, J.C.D.
Red Mass Homily
30.IX.12



The author A.J. Cronin told the story of a district nurse he knew during the time he practiced medicine. She covered a ten-mile district by herself, was extremely capable and generous with her time. She was patient and cheerful. Her salary was insignificant and late one night after a particularly strenuous day, Dr. Cronin suggested that she demand a higher salary. “God knows you are worth it”, he added. Her reply was classic, “if God knows I’m worth it, that is all that matters to me”.¹

Indeed if we live and work with the confidence that we are inserted into the Lord’s plan, then that is all that matters. Is that not what the word of God tells us this morning at the 60th annual Red Mass as the readings invite us to be open to the Spirit of God, beg His blessing on a new judicial year, and strive to be instruments of a new evangelization?

The passage from the Book of Numbers is fascinating. The Lord has guided the Chosen People out of Egypt and through the desert, but there is a structure and a system to govern them. Seventy elders are chosen to help Moses with the task of judging, but Eldad and Medad miss the installation. Still they receive the gift and the mission.

To Joshua’s concern about a possible challenge to Moses’ leadership, he explains that the divine gift is not limited by place, but attached to the person, wherever he or she might be found. The sovereign liberty of God determines how He will act and that obliges the believer of all times to question the temptation to close God within the narrow spaces of a justice which assigns itself the task of protecting the presumed rights of God while trampling upon those of his or her brothers and sisters.

¹ Cf. Father Richard Beyer, *The Catholic Heart Day by Day*, p. 323.

Of course, you and I live in a world of forms, ID's, procedures, and verification. One commentator on this passage suggested that in the near future in order to die you will have to fill out the appropriate form, and perhaps a diligent clerk will tell you to save the receipt to present to St. Peter at the Gates of Paradise.

Moses' wish is the better course: "Would that all the people of the Lord were prophets!" His invitation is to look for the evidence of the good, of truth, and of the beautiful in another. There is not a monopoly of the Spirit, but rather an abundance of gifts to be used to build up the Body of Christ.

How appropriate it is to speak about that abundance on September 30th when we would normally celebrate St. Jerome, a learned doctor of the Church who was first charged to translate the Bible from its original languages to the vernacular Latin. His talents were used to make the Word of God accessible to the ordinary folk.

We remember him and remain inspired by his quest for learning as we gather as a community of faith to beg an abundance of blessings upon the women and men of our judiciary and the legal profession. It is a moment to pause and pray for those who serve our Country and foster justice for all. We know that a believing community engages in prayer for the needs of all, but especially for those who face arduous tasks.

Indeed "Justice is radically intolerant of injustice; justice seeks out injustice to destroy it. To emphasize security at the expense of eradicating injustice creates a fool's paradise"² The Romans put it more succinctly: "Justitia non novit patrem nec matrem; solum veritatem spectat justitia." Justice knows neither father nor mother; justice looks to the truth alone.

For that reason we are here primarily to pray with you and for you as you execute the daunting task assigned to you at various levels. We beg a blessing for all of you and for all of those who assist you in this important ministry. We invoke the only Just One so that He might inspire all that you do. We recognize "that those who involve themselves with human law are doing God's work. You are called to be involved with the same matters with which the Lord God is involved in relationship with His creation."³

We have heard the question posed by the Apostles just before the Lord Jesus ascended into heaven. Their vision was of a political reality alone: the end of the hated Roman rule and the independence of the Chosen People. It was a vision firmly anchored in this world alone. They would need the gift of the Holy

² Most Reverend Robert J. Dwyer, at Red Mass, 1957.

³ Most Reverend Daniel Pilarczyk, Red Mass, 1988.

Spirit so as to purify their goals, understand their mission correctly and be able to accomplish it.

So we pray for all of those gathered here that they might welcome the strength of the Holy Spirit and the interior dynamism with which He fills our hearts. We do so just before the beginning of the Year of Faith given to us by the Holy Father, because there is a “need to rediscover the journey of faith so as to shed ever clearer light on the joy and renewed enthusiasm of the encounter with Christ.”⁴

The mission is always audacious, but it is possible with the gifts of the Holy Spirit. We are instruments in the hands of the Lord and so we pray to be ever open to His presence. The message is filled with hope: not only for eternal life, but also for the graces necessary so that our lives are truly noble, worthy of God, and of the vocation He has given us.

We speak so often of the new evangelization, because we recognize that we must be its instruments in all that we do. The faith we hold in our hearts must motivate the decisions, the words, and the commitment of our everyday existence. That existence is extraordinary, because it is infused with divine grace. St. Thomas More said that he died the good servant of the King, but the faithful servant of God first. We, too, are faithful citizens only when we embrace the fullness of the principles of our faith and allow them to enliven and fortify our contributions to the life of the Nation. Or to draw on the eloquence of the Archbishop of Baltimore in a paraphrase: we must be loyal Americans by being bold and courageous men and women of faith and conviction regarding the ethical norms that guide society and its choices.⁵

There is so much that we bring to the discourse of our society. Our faith expresses itself in worship, but also in witness. From the beginning the Church has been active in society to make a contribution, especially to the care of the poor, but also to education. The first universities grew out of the monasteries. We cannot separate who we are from how we live. To quote Father Alfred Delp, a Jesuit condemned to death by the Nazis, “Futility or ineffectiveness do not dispense one from speaking the truth, declaring what is right and just...Woe if the prophets are mute out of fear that their word might not be heeded.”⁶

I am reminded of my first year as a seminarian in Rome. An important 19th Century Justice Department building was closed because it was unsafe. It seemed to be sinking into the ground. Yet the Colosseum, Pantheon, and the ruins of the Roman Forum were all still standing and could be visited. It was an

⁴ Benedict XVI, *Porta Fidei*, 2.

⁵ Cf. Archbishop William Lori, Installation Mass homily, 16.V.12.

⁶ Father Alfred Delp, S.J. as quoted in *Magnificat*, Vol. 14, N. 6, (2012), p. 390-1.

apt reminder that not everything contemporary is good and that stable foundations are essential. Our society must also rest on stable, clear foundations. Otherwise, we run the risk of sinking into the mire of one popular sound byte after another!

Last January the Holy Father recalled for the Bishops of this region that consensus about the nature of reality and the moral good and the conditions for human flourishing at the heart of every culture. “In America, that consensus, as enshrined in your nation’s founding documents, was grounded in a worldview shaped not only by faith but a commitment to certain ethical principles deriving from nature and nature’s God.”⁷

Cronin’s nurse knew that, as well. She recognized that the ultimate value was the eternal judgment rendered by Almighty God. “Whoever loves me will keep my word, and my Father will love him, and we will come to him and make our dwelling with him.”⁸

⁷ Benedict XVI, Address to Bishops of Region IV, 19.I.12.

⁸ Jn. 14:23b.