

**Archbishop Timothy P. Broglio, J.C.D.**  
Red Mass at the Church of Sts. Peter and Paul in San Francisco, CA  
27 September 2018  
(Is. 9:1-6; Heb. 4:12-4; Jn. 14:23-9)



A story is told about a family where the mother of a five-year old boy was suddenly called to take care of her mother who was gravely ill in another city. Due to the unexpected nature of this trip, the father had to take his son to work with him. He gathered some toys in a hurry and set off.

He put the lad in a room that was not in use and gave him some toys and then tried to work. Of course, little ones at that age do not have a long attention span and so the boy was constantly back in his father's office. Spying a magazine with a map of the world, the father tore out the page and tore the map into small pieces. He thought that the puzzle would occupy his son for some time as he recomposed the map with tape.

Five minutes later the boy was back and the map was well-ordered. I have a prodigy, a candidate for Stamford, thought the father. "How did you put the map back together so quickly?" he asked the boy.

"Oh, it was easy, Dad. I turned over the pieces and there was a man on the back. I put the pieces of the man in order and then the map of the world was complete."

Is that not so true? When the human person is ordered, then the world is complete and harmony reigns. By the way, we might not then need a legal system!

This evening, because perfect order has not been restored, the annual Red Mass allows us the occasion to beg divine guidance and the presence of the Holy Spirit in our activities for the coming year. I am very grateful for the gracious invitation of Archbishop Cordileone to join you this evening. When we lived at the Villa Stritch in Rome, I never foresaw this possibility. Tonight we hear inspired words about light, the power of the Word of God, and an invitation to be open to the Holy Spirit.

Isaiah speaks to us about light in the first reading, which we normally associate with the Mass at night on the Solemnity of Christmas. In that context it is a light of salvation in the night which brings joy and hope to an oppressed people in a very fragile political situation. It is not blinding and does not hurt our eyes. It penetrates hearts with sweetness

and infuses joy. It is the fragile light of a flickering candle or the powerful lights of this place. It shatters the darkness of the night as does the Easter candle, which proclaims the ultimate significance of the mission of Jesus Christ in the world.

As we look out at the world today we might pray with the prophet Isaiah as did Pope Benedict XVI eight years ago: “Lord, make your promise come fully true...Burn the tramping boots. Let the time of the garments rolled in blood come to an end. Fulfill the prophecy that ‘of peace there will be no end’...Establish the dominion of your truth and your love in the world.”<sup>1</sup>

In the legal profession you dedicate yourselves to the search for truth, the protection of the rights of all, especially the most vulnerable, and respect for the dignity of the human person. You have come to this shining, splendid church with a prayer for the light necessary to see and decide more clearly. You come to renew your commitment to what is right and good in the sight of God. 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” 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.

Therefore, we beg a blessing for all of you and for all of those who assist you in this important and daunting 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.”<sup>2</sup>

There is a caveat. The author of the second reading this evening reminds us that the Word of God is living, efficacious, and sharp. That means that we must listen to that Word and allow it to challenge us, because when we welcome it, it becomes a source of life. Of course, it is not always so easy to embrace it. It may oblige us to make choices and changes. We can be tempted to compartmentalize God or make our relationship with Him a series of checklists. The invitation is to enter into a vibrant relationship with Him. That means that we are able to grow in our love and understanding.

Sometimes His word makes us a bit uncomfortable, but it should always challenge us to move forward. We cannot stay in the same place, because we are living and have an ultimate goal which is eternal life. Just yesterday the passage from the Book of Proverbs reminded us: “Two things I ask of you....Put falsehood and lying far from me, give me neither poverty nor riches; provide me only with the food I need.”<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Benedict XVI, homily at “Midnight” Mass, 2010.

<sup>2</sup> Most Reverend Daniel Pilarczyk, Red Mass, 1988.

<sup>3</sup> Prov. 30: 7-8.

We are dependent on the gift of the Holy Spirit mentioned in the Gospel. Of course, we must be open to the gift and put it to use. Some gifts are never used, but this one is too precious to be set aside.

“All of our actions should be the continuation of the Incarnation itself. We try to consign all of our actions to the Spirit who is in us, in such a way that His image can be recognized in each one of them. The Spirit asks for nothing more. He has not come to rest in us; He is indefatigable, insatiable in action. Only one thing can impede Him: the fact that we with our ill will do not permit Him to act or we do not have enough confidence in Him and we are not truly convinced that He has only one thing to do: act. If we will allow Him, the Spirit would be absolutely untiring and would make use of all things. As you know better than I, it does not take much to extinguish a feeble flame, but a blazing forest fire consumes everything. If we were people of faith, we could entrust all the activity of a day to the Spirit, regardless of its nature, and He would transform it into life.”<sup>4</sup>

Indeed so precious is this gift that we really cannot accomplish our tasks in life without the help of the Holy Spirit. Your delicate role in society depends on your ability to use all of the gifts you have received. Pope Francis made that point in an address to members of the legal profession four years ago:

“A judge’s decisions influence not only the rights and property of citizens, but are also pertinent to their very existence. Consequently, a judge must, on every level, possess the intellectual, psychological and moral qualities that guarantee integrity to such an important role. Among all qualities, the one that predominates, and I would say is specific to the judge, is prudence....It is a virtue of governing, a virtue that moves things forward, the virtue that predisposes one to ponder calmly the reasons of law and which must, in fact, be the basis of judgment. One has a high level of prudence when there is a strong inner balance, the ability to overcome the pressures that emanate from one’s own character, from one’s own personal views, from one’s own ideological convictions.”<sup>5</sup>

That task, envisioned by the Bishop of Rome, is not easy. It requires us to make use of the gift of the Spirit and indeed all our gifts. We gather in this place of worship as a people of faith. We believe that our faith and our commitment to live according to the tenants of the Gospel have a just influence on who we are and how we decide. “Whoever loves me will keep my word”, Jesus tells us.

Several years ago, then Archbishop Hickey observed: “Historically, it has been the right and duty of the Church to speak to the moral issues before the government. It is no less our obligation today! Our nation is enriched when citizens and groups approach public affairs from positions grounded in moral convictions and fundamental values. Otherwise, public life can easily become just a forum for fulfilling personal ambition or advancing special interests. Our laws do in fact reflect our values and moral convictions. The American traditions of pluralism and open debate are strengthened—not hurt—by the

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<sup>4</sup> M. Delbrêl, *Indivisible amore. Frammenti di lettere*, p 45.

<sup>5</sup> Pope Francis, *Discourse to Italian Magistrates*, 17.VI.14.

active participation of all its citizens in the search for public consensus and the common good.”<sup>6</sup>

Indeed, when the human person is in order, everything else falls into place. Part of being in order, however, is having that courage to do what is right and just at all times and not to be swayed by every wind that comes our way. In a world where social media prevails and it becomes a challenge to recognize and embrace the truth, we look for Divine Assistance and the power of authentic virtue. Consequently to be ordered, we beg the guidance of the Holy Spirit for our actions in the coming year.

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<sup>6</sup> James A. Hickey, homily at the Red Mass, 1983.