

Archbishop Timothy P. Broglio, J.C.D.

Annunciation 2022

25 March 2021

(Consecration of Russia and Ukraine)



Dear Brothers and Sisters,

In 1989 the Iron Curtain was being torn down and the Berlin wall was crumbling. I was stationed at the Nunciature in Paraguay and the Nuncio was from East Germany. Seeing the radical changes through his eyes made a profound impression. On the night of 2 February we sat on the floor of the hallway in the Nunciature and listened to his battery-operated radio. We could hear the gunfire as the forces aligned with General Rodriguez sought to end the dictatorship of Alfredo Stroessner.

It was a time for new beginnings even in that under-populated, land-locked nation. We do not hear the sound of guns here, but our connected world tells us of another struggle. A free Nation is fighting off unwanted invaders from the powerful Nation next door. People sacrifice and fight valiantly for what is theirs and precious. They resist aggression. None of our communities are strangers to these situations.

In this context we gather in prayer and hear the prophet Isaiah at another challenging juncture of history and we admire the openness of our Blessed Mother.

Isaiah's ministry takes place at a difficult moment in salvation history. The people are beginning to experience the exile in Babylon. They are uncertain and depressed. Their limited vision only allows them to see a bleak future. The prophet teaches about the attractiveness of divine truth, which, when embraced, gives the necessary courage to take the steep path. They can live the hope that transforms and sustains their life.

It is so important today to know how to perceive this type of motivation. Our era is not easy. We still labor under the effects of the pandemic, the economy is uncertain, many still suffer and tyrants make us all reflect. There is war in Europe, Africa, and the

Middle East, uncertainties in our cities, and other worries on all sides. We are concerned that the poor, especially the immigrants will suffer more or anew the indignity of poverty and deportation. In the midst of so many challenges we must be able to recognize, celebrate, and feel this divine love.

The universality of the call to Jerusalem and the Temple Mount found in Isaiah might seem to be a reality when you see the reverence of all three monotheistic religions for that place. However, we also see it as a place of conflict. We know that our vision must be broadened.

In the post-synodal Apostolic Exhortation *Evangelii Gaudium*, Pope Francis tells us: “We become fully human when we become more than human, when we let God bring us beyond ourselves in order to attain the fullest truth of our being. Here we find the source and inspiration of all our efforts at evangelization.”¹

The angel Gabriel, the force or strength of God, came to a humble virgin of Nazareth and made known the divine plan. Think about the amazing change to her existence. Think about the changes that came to her plans. What does she tell Joseph? What will Joachim and Ann think?

However, she brings none of these concerns to her dialogue with Gabriel. Simply she states the obvious, that she is a virgin and then the words that have become a model of fidelity forever after: “be it done to me according to thy word”. She makes no conditions, but opens herself completely to the will of God. Her fiat is the prayer of the faithful person in the face of the divine will.

The catechism emphasizes this role of our Mother. “The Father of mercies willed that the Incarnation should be preceded by assent on the part of the predestined mother, so that just as a woman had a share in the coming of death, so also should a woman contribute to the coming of life.”²

She teaches us how to experience true serenity and inner peace. “It is in being a man or woman of Advent: one who listens more than speaks, one who is aware and lives the truth that ‘nothing is impossible for God’. If God gives us little, it means that we have hoped for little. It is, in fact, impossible to nourish someone who is not hungry.”³

Without hearing gunfire and sitting in pews rather than the floor, but still uncertain, we gather today in response to an invitation from the Bishop of Rome to join him in consecrating Russia and Ukraine to the Immaculate Heart of Mary. We will do so in a few moments and we pray for peace. We grasp at the hope held out by Isaiah as we open ourselves with Mary to be instruments of the will of God.

¹ Pope Francis, *Evangelii gaudium*, 8.

² CCC 488.

³ G. Danneels, *Le stagioni della vita*, p. 211.