

**Archbishop Timothy P. Broglio, J.C.D.**  
Chrism Mass 2021  
23 March 2021



Divine Providence determined that I was in Balangiga in the Philippines in December 2018 when the U.S. Department of Defense returned the church bells to San Lorenzo Parish. They had been taken as a war trophy in 1901. The return occasioned a time of celebration, because something important was restored to a parish community. A war trophy whose significance had long been forgotten in the States, brought joy to the people of a parish and a town with echoes throughout that Nation.

It comes to mind, because today is a moment of renewal and the word of God speaks to us about restoration in virtue and our priestly ministry of reconciliation in a period of pandemic, division, and tension.

We will renew the promises of our ordination in this celebration which recalls the gift of priestly ministry to the Church at the Last Supper. The Gospel with the inaugural address of the Lord Jesus is set in Nazareth, His home-town. For most of the priests this is not home, but for all of us the altar and sanctuary are home, the place of our upbringing, the place where we are called to preside, almost as the Pater familias of the community of faith.

The Book of Revelation refers to the love of Christ and uses a present participle: continuous, habitual action: "this expression provides a premise that must not be forgotten amid all the trials His followers will face." Constant theme for this book written in a time of persecution. Regardless of our situation, we recognize and are guided by the loving presence of the Savior.<sup>1</sup>

Looking back to the moment of our ordination we rekindle that enthusiasm and rediscover the qualities which mark our response to the call to a deeper holiness. Renewing our commitment, we renew our pursuit of virtue. Virtue comes from *vir* meaning man, manliness, worth.

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<sup>1</sup> Cf. Peter Williamson, *Revelation*, p. 45.

Prudence is the virtue that allows us to judge correctly what is right and what is wrong in any given situation. "Justice is concerned with the will. It is "the constant and permanent determination to give everyone his or her rightful due."<sup>2</sup>

Fortitude allows us to overcome fear and to remain steady in our will in the face of obstacles, but it is always reasoned and reasonable; the person exercising fortitude does not seek danger for danger's sake. Prudence and justice are the virtues through which we decide what needs to be done; fortitude gives us the strength to do it.

"Temperance is the virtue that attempts to keep us from excess, and, as such, requires the balancing of legitimate goods against our inordinate desire for them. ....Temperance is the "golden mean" that helps us determine how far we can act on our desires."<sup>3</sup>

Many more virtues could be listed and we are called to cultivate them all. We might be tempted to say that no one can do that. Archbishop Aquila made this comment last year: "Pope Francis reminds us frequently, when we say 'impossible' it is the voice of the devil. The Lord tells us it is possible if we depend on Him. And if we fall, we pick ourselves up and run to Jesus. St. Thérèse of Lisieux reflected, that in her weakness, in her little sins that she may have committed, she always knew that she could run to Jesus and cover his face with kisses, trusting in his love."<sup>4</sup>

The priesthood is a great gift by Christ to His Church. Another bishop described it this way: "The Church belongs to Christ and its mission is determined by what He suffered on Calvary. It is not determined by what we find convenient or even popular, let alone populist. Our Gospel passage comes at the very beginning of Jesus' public life. He knows what He is called to do and be. He is prepared to walk that path whatever it may ask of Him. Jesus seeks out the little ones and tells His Church to bind up the broken hearts, those who mourn and who are despondent. It is a monumental task – but Jesus says that the Spirit has been given to us so that His message can be credible in our day and in our circumstances."<sup>5</sup>

Sometimes we feel the weight of the charge on our shoulders. We might resemble more the olives pitted and pressed than the oil of gladness. Here both Isaiah and Jesus according to St. Luke remind us that the Spirit of the Lord is upon us. He enables us to proclaim the glad tidings to the privileged recipients who are the poor in the widest sense possible: the economically indigent, those so smothered by the riches of this world or so convinced of their own self-sufficiency that they are blinded to the presence of God, and those who struggle to know Jesus Christ. We are responsible for all of them.

As we heard on Ash Wednesday, now is the acceptable time. Now is the definitive moment of Jubilee. We offer freedom from debt (from sin); to captives liberty from the

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<sup>2</sup> Cf. John A. Hardon, *Modern Catholic Dictionary*.

<sup>3</sup> Excerpted from *About Catholicism*.

<sup>4</sup> Samuel Aquila, Homily for the Chrism Mass, 10.IV.20.

<sup>5</sup> Donal McKeown, Homily for the Chrism Mass in Derry, 2020.

bondage of sin, sight to the blind: challenge, because people do not know that they cannot see; truth has been so relativized, that the blind see only their side, only listen to what canonizes their preconceived conclusions, and turn off whatever challenges them to grow.<sup>6</sup>

St. John Paul II reminded us that “the priest is called to reveal to others, in Jesus Christ, the true face of God, and as a result the true face of humanity.”<sup>7</sup>

We are clearly in a time of renewal. Faced with disbelief or doubt about the Real Presence of Christ in the Eucharist, we must find ways to rekindle faith in that most precious gift. After a year of life-streamed prayers, people must learn to hunger for full and active participation in the life of the Church, which is defined by the sacraments.

Yet you and I, despite our fatigue, discouragement, and uncertainty, must offer hope to those entrusted to us who are overwhelmed by the experience of the pandemic and uncertain about the way forward. It is not an easy time, but the Lord walks with us.

Perhaps today we can be inspired by St. Turibius of Mogrovejo, the Archbishop of Lima, who despite the enormous distances in his archdiocese, the hundreds of languages, the lack of communication among the towns separated by the peaks of the Andes, made pastoral visitations everywhere with the means available in the XVI century. He might be a good patron for my auxiliary bishops and me as we trot about the globe.<sup>8</sup>

Those you and I are privileged to serve either defend our Nation, prepare for military service, or now bear in their bodies and minds the wounds of that same commitment. We are all aware of the division that has seized our country and divided brothers and sisters more deeply than ever before. In the face of such division, you and I must be instruments of reconciliation. We are charged by the Lord to “move human hearts that enemies may speak to each other again, adversaries join hands, and peoples seek to meet together.” We are empowered to see how “hatred [might be] overcome by love, revenge gives way to forgiveness, and discord is changed to mutual respect.”<sup>9</sup>

The Lord has anointed our hands and some of our heads for the service of His Kingdom, which in this passage means more than a people ruled by the King, “but also a royal people who already reign with Him.”<sup>10</sup> We recognize sadly how incomplete it is, but we are confident that we will know its fullness in the future. The passage from the Book of Revelation identifies the Christ as the alpha and the omega, the Lord of the universe and of history. We have that consolation and the time of pandemic has reminded all of us that He is in charge.

Tell “those baptized into Christ [that they] present priestly worship by offering their whole lives as spiritual sacrifices in union with Christ in the Eucharist, as well as giving

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<sup>6</sup> Cf. Pablo T. Gadenz, *The Gospel of Luke*, pp. 98-100.

<sup>7</sup> St. John Paul II, *Pastores dabo vobis*, 72.

<sup>8</sup> Cf. Zevini y Cabra, *Lectio Divina*, 16, p. 198

<sup>9</sup> Eucharistic Prayer for Reconciliation II (preface).

<sup>10</sup> Williamson, *op.cit.*, p. 47

alms and interceding for the whole world.”<sup>11</sup> Despite the tensions so powerful in our world, the Lord God has not abandoned us and He still sends us forth, filled with the power of His word of truth.

Dear Brothers, the bells of Balagiga are made of metal that will eventually wear out and crack. However, they represent an important symbol to a people. What we renew this evening will last until the end of time. The priesthood is not merely symbolic, but effects what it signifies. Tonight we both thank the Lord for His call and gift and we renew our commitment to be effective instruments of renewal for the world in our time.

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<sup>11</sup> *Ibid.*