

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

4 October 2026

Red Mass in Washington DC

(Jl 2:23a, 26-3:1-3a; Phil 4:6-9; Jn.14:23-6)



Dear Sisters and Brothers in Christ,

First of all, allow me to express my gratitude to Cardinal McElroy and the John Carroll Society for the invitation to preach this morning. I add my own greetings to all of the dignitaries and members of the legal profession and schools of law who participate in this celebration. Your service to order and the virtue of justice is deeply appreciated even by this canon lawyer.

The chapel at the Law School of Notre Dame University has three stain glass windows in the apse: one is of Saint Thomas More, the Patron of lawyers who cleverly defended himself and ultimately chose martyrdom rather than deny his faith. "I die the King's good servant, but God's first!" The second is of the Blessed Virgin Mary, patroness of that university. Curiously the central window is dominated by a cross and the word "caritas", charity or love.

One wonders if the visual images seek to emphasize that the greatest of virtues dominates all professions and becomes the currency by which we act in our world. Praying in that chapel, I could not help but ask the Lord that as a Judeo-Christian people we might discover anew the power of that virtue, "the good with which this court is satisfied"¹ in the words of Dante. The more it reigns the better is our existence and the closer it resembles our ultimate goal.

How appropriate that we gather at the traditional beginning of the judicial year to beg divine blessings on our human endeavors by invoking the guidance of the Holy Spirit and entrusting our cares to a loving God who brings consolation to us.

¹ Dante, *Il Paradiso*, "Lo ben che facontenta questacorte," Canto XXVI, 16.

In the Gospel passage taken from the farewell discourse of Jesus to His disciples at the Last Supper, the Lord makes it clear that there is a link between love and respect for the commandments. We do not often think about that link, because so often a rule is interpreted as a restraint or a limit that somehow restricts my liberty. In the mouth of Jesus Christ, it becomes clear that my respect for the commandments is an expression of my response to the loving God who has given me these precepts to ensure my happiness or my respect for my neighbor.

Essentially liberty in the Christian context is never from, but always for. We have been redeemed, freed from sin, so that we might give witness to the Gospel, so that we might meet our neighbors' needs, or so that we might respect his or her rights. Keeping the Lord's word also means that the Triune God dwells with us and we draw on His presence to move forward. Gradually, we learn that we are not the center of existence. There are others, as well.

If we all took that to heart we probably would need fewer courts and smaller police forces. However, life is always a pilgrimage and we are always in the process of growing into our more perfect response to the divine grace held out to us. Indeed Msgr. Vaghi wrote: "As powerful as the grace of baptism is....it does not deliver us from the weakness of human nature. If we are honest, we will admit that each of us must fight daily against the inclination toward evil."²

Hence it is good to invoke the wisdom and power of the Holy Spirit to guide our endeavors and bring us to the fullness of our potential in all our activities. We pray also that our understanding of God's presence and His Commandments will inspire integrity, devotion to duty, and the promotion of harmony. Tocqueville, in his brilliant analysis of the nascent systems in the United States, recalled by Bishop Barron, believed that "without a vibrant religiosity, a democratic society would, in the end, disintegrate into a vague collectivity of warring individuals."³

On the contrary we have heard Joel's eschatological vision of a people filled with the Spirit bringing to fulfillment the prayer of Moses that all might be prophets. The Spirit vivifies, creates, and propels people to leadership. The vision is of a people that possess all charisms, all gifts, and emerge as the ideal community.⁴ We add our voice to the prophet's wish and our prayer that all might be filled with the Spirit of God.

We borrow some confidence from St. Paul's Letter to the Philippians who suggests prayer, peace, and pondering. We do the first this morning, because prayer even in the confines of the heart obliges us to think and to commit ourselves. Words give clarity, convey emotion, and draw us to commitment.

In the midst of the challenges and anxieties of the contemporary world, we seek the presence of God. We know that the marks of His presence are consolation, peace, and that

² Peter Vaghi, *The Faith We Profess*, p.121.

³ Robert Barron, Red Mass Homily in New Orleans, 2021.

⁴ Cf. Geoffrey E. Wood, "Joel" in *The Jerome Biblical Commentary*, p. 442.

serenity that tells us we are in the right place and engaged as we should be. Those marks should instill trust in us as we move forward. When we look at the cross we are reassured, because we know that Almighty God can bring good even from evil.

Whatever is true, honorable, just, lovely, gracious, and excellent to paraphrase Saint Paul affords us that peace that comes from the Lord. The invitation is to ponder these things and direct our thoughts. To quote Dr. Kreeft: “Thoughts are horses; they take you to real places. We must learn to ride them to direct them to good places and not evil.”⁵

Perhaps if more of us directed our thoughts in the ways of peace, we would discover and develop a more civil society and learn to live in harmony with our neighbors. The late Pope Francis told me that authentic synodal discussion would be guided by the Holy Spirit and the result would be harmony. The concept is also germane on what would normally be the Memorial of Saint Francis, whose life embodied the notion of being at peace with each other, with nature, and within ourselves.

I was thinking about that notion when we celebrated the 250th anniversary of the Declaration of Independence. It was a national event, but with the exception of the descendants of those who welcomed Columbus, of the passengers of the Mayflower, and of the other early immigrants who were already here, few of our ancestors had yet arrived in this land. Certainly, mine were in some German dutchy and in Borgofranco d’Ivrea—probably all ignorant of the colonies in rebellion against Britain. Yet, we all celebrated together last July, because this has become home and its history our history. The same is also true for those arriving today and at the end of the last century. All contribute to building up the nation.

In his first encyclical, Pope Leo wrote that the way a society treats migrants, refugees, and those forced to move “reveals whether its sense of justice is driven by fear or by the spirit of fraternity.”⁶

Caritas certainly has a place in the law school just as it has a place in every angle of society. If we come to beg the Father to send the Holy Spirit upon the members of the legal profession this morning, we do so with confidence in His care and in the fervent hope the caritas will be a part of the gift. It is true that our homeland is in heaven and so we are on a journey. On that pilgrimage we walk in hope and Cardinal McElroy reminded us last year that members of legal profession are architects of hope. However, it is also true that believers are called to proclaim the Kingdom of heaven and to invite everyone to that Kingdom. Tocqueville’s wish for a vibrant religious culture operating outside the direct control of the state, but permeating the civil society vitalizes the Nation⁷ and also testifies to that hope.

⁵ Peter Kreeft, *Food for the Soul*, A, p. 702.

⁶ Pope Leo XIV, *Magnifica Humanitas*, 81.

⁷ Cf. Barron, *op. cit.*