

Cardinal O'Malley Homily  
V National Encuentro  
Saturday, September 22, 2018

My Dear Brothers and Sisters, good morning.

I am Friar Sean O'Malley, capuchin brother and director of all the complaints at the Archdiocese of Boston. It belongs to Region 1 and of course it's Red Sock nation. Seriously, it pains me to tell you that our homilist, Bishop Nelson Pérez, Bishop of Cleveland, got sick and had to return home, so we are going to pray for him and for his health during this Mass. This means you get substitute, a pinch-hitter. I ask for your patience.

I have been blessed to be part of all of the Encuentros, since the first one. As they say, "The devil knows more because he's old rather than because he's the devil." I have seen up close the marvelous fruits of the Encuentros. And during this time of pain and shame for our Catholic Church our celestial father, in his infinite mercy and bountiful providence has given us this Encuentro as an oasis of joy, light, and hope. Your homework as missionary disciples is to help our Church find the joy of the Gospel in the middle of the darkness and pain. And I as your Shephard say, "Thank you! Thank you! Thank You!"

My favorite theologian, besides Hosffman Ospino, is Archie Bunker. In a conversation that Archie had with his son-in-law, Meathead. He would say some insults against Jewish people, since he was prejudiced in many ways. But his son-in-law would reprimand him, "You should be ashamed! Remember that Jesus was Jewish." Archie replied, "Yes, but only on his mother's side." That's why I say he is my favorite theologian. Mary is the mother of Zion, the new Jerusalem, the new Eve.

They once asked Larry King, "If you could pick any person in history to interview on your television show, who would you choose?" He said, "I would choose Jesus Christ." They asked him, "What would you ask Jesus Christ?" Larry King, a Jew said, "I would ask Jesus if it is true that he was born of a virgin mother?" He said the response to that question, for him, would redefine the entire history of the world. We know the answer to that question. Mary is a mother and virgin and Christ is God and man. He is our redeemer. The mystery is written in his body. He is the link between humanity and our God. The answer defines the history.

In Massachusetts in the Island of Martha's Vineyard, we have a beautiful Church, it is a vacation spot, many go there on vacation, and people often visit it during their vacations. The Church has many stained glass windows that represent the seven sacraments of the Church. But when you enter the first stained glass window you see is the stained glass window that represents the Sacrament of Reconciliation. It has a priestly stole, the crisscrossed keys and the scripture passage underneath reads "Go and sin no more!" The Church is not air conditioned and during the summer they open all the windows, but for that window, the only open the part that opens

is the part that reads “no”. So the tourists come in and read “Go and sin more.” In my many years as a Bishop, no tourist has ever complained about that window.

The irony is that people think that we Catholics are the “People of No.” Don’t do this. Don’t do that. But we are the people of Yes! Yes to God! Yes to Life! Yes to love! Yes to Justice! To the stranger, the immigrant, the poor! Yes to the cross! Mary is the first disciple and she is a woman who says yes! Ignacio Larrañaga, in his beautiful book “The Silence of Mary”, says that Mary is a woman of few words. There are very few words spoken by Mary in the Gospels but they are very significant. The first word from Mary in the Gospel is her “Yes!” In the annunciation she says- “Behold! I am the handmaid of the Lord. May it be done to me according to your word.” Her trust, her yes to the Lord! She is the person, like mother Teresa said, “Gave permission to God.” When God was knocking on humanity’s door, Mary opens the door in our name and invites God to enter into our history and into our family. Mary is a woman of yes like von Balthasar said “Her yes is a yes that allows something to happen.” The most important thing in history happened when Mary said yes. And the last words of Mary which is my episcopal motto, and are the words of Mary at the wedding at Cana. She says, “Do whatever he tells you.” Her first word is yes and her last words instruct us to also say yes. If we say yes, we will also help to change history. We will open that door a bit more to let the light of God into our world. Mary’s yes is constant, firm, and unwavering.

In the Gospel we see Mary in Calvary. When I was a young friar, I was in Rome and went to see a movie “The Gospel of Luke.” That movie was very famous but very controversial because the director was a communist. All the Italians and friars in Rome chastised me, “How can you go see that movie?” I responded “It’s the Gospel.” But when I returned to the convent from the movie they were dying from curiosity. They wanted to know every detail of the movie. I told them I liked it a lot, but the only thing that I did not like was the way that he presented Mary. They asked why. In Calvary she was by the cross yelling, she was hysterical, she fell to the ground, they picked her up, she would fall again. The friars said, “Look, you are Irish American, you don’t understand. If she did not do that, the Italians would think that she did not love Jesus.” But when we read the Gospel, it says that Mary was **STANDING** by the cross. As we sing during Lent, “*Stabat mater dolorosa juxta crucem lacrimosa.*” She was standing, a column of strength, courage and faith. Mary in her broken heart is still saying, “Yes, Lord.” Just as Jesus prayed at Gethsemane, “Not my will, but yours.” In her silence her yes is, without hesitating, strong, unconditional, absolute. And in this context, Jesus speaks some of his seven words. And he gives us his mother. “Behold, your mother.” “Behold, your son.” And Mary keep responding “Yes.” This time it is a joyful yes because she accepts us, we are her children. It is Christ’s will and his wish from the cross. And Mary rejoices because she is our mother. Jesus has left us his mother to console us and to also teach us to be faithful disciples.

In spite of all family divisions, Mary is the mother that is capable of gathering us, reuniting us and tell us, “Behold, your brothers and your sisters! Love them, forgive them, help them! One month after this scene in Calvary, the disciples gathered in the Cenacle, around Mary as we heard in the first reading of the Acts of the Apostles. And there, pastoral conversion took place. A novena of intense prayer and the Holy Spirit filled the apostles, the disciples, the cowards,

those left disoriented, those who fled, those who negated Jesus, those filled with confusion and fear, those who were under the witness protection program. They were hiding. They suddenly throw themselves to continue Jesus' mission. The mission that Jesus had entrusted unto them, announcing the Good News in Jerusalem which was filled with pilgrims and foreigners. This group of simple people, fishermen and laborers, announcing the Good News. And everyone heard them announce the wonders of God and everyone understood them in their own language. The language of the Holy Spirit is love that does not know borders. The disciples received the flame of the Holy Spirit and immediately share them with others who were strangers and foreigners, but thanks to the faith, they go on to be brother and sisters.

We are not orphans. We have father that created us and loves us even when we are indifferent, even when we are the prodigal son and want to live our life without him. Our God never ceases to love us, to forgive us, to call us to get closer to him with confidence. And when our Redeemer gives us all, his own life, he gives us even more. He give us his own mother to also be our own.

The Japanese people have a beautiful parable. They tell of man who lived in a beautiful huge house on a mountain. Every day he strolled his garden and contemplated the ocean. And one day he noticed a Tsunami in horizon approaching and he saw his neighbors were on a picnic at the beach and he wanted to warn them. He began to yell at them because they were too far. They could not hear or see him. He then entered his beautiful home and lit it on fire and when they saw the blaze and smoke, some said let us go up the mountain and save our neighbor's home. Others said, "No, that mountain is too high and we are having so much fun here at the beach. You go." Those that went up the mountain to help their friend, were saved. But those that stayed behind having fun, perished when the water arrived at the beach.

Sometimes when we are carrying out an act of piety, mercy, or justice we congratulate ourselves because we are doing God a favor. But we are actually ascending that mountain of love, getting closer to God, to the light, to salvation. And that mountain of love is Calvary, where love overcomes death, overcomes sin. And at that mountain of love we will again hear Jesus' beautiful words, behold the tree of the cross and listen, "Behold, your mother. Behold, your brothers and sisters," persevering in prayer so that we can be a People of Yes, of *fiat* (let it be done). Or as young people say "Simón!(Yes)". So that we can be missionary disciples and get to the work of announcing the Good News to the poor, liberating the prisoners, and sight to the blind. Today our shout is not a shout of pain but of Joy, faith, and affection as we say, "Long live the Blessed Virgin, mother of the Church and mother of Christ!"