

Archbishop Gustavo García Siller – opening prayer homily

Sisters and brothers, let us open our hearts to the Holy Spirit. Today, here in the United States, he needs us more than ever as living stones of the Church. We can say in human terms that he is the encounter between the Father and the Son and he is also our own encounter with Jesus and with each other. The Holy Spirit is the Lord, the giver of life, the mystical Body of Christ. At the start of these days of our discernment process, we ask that the Holy Spirit come. Come, Holy Spirit, come. Come, Holy Spirit, come.

The Church, the mystical Body of Christ, has received bad news lately about the guilt of its shepherds, priests and bishops. And dear lay brothers and sisters, it has broken your hearts and rightly so. You are right to be broken-hearted by the faults of your shepherds, priests and bishops.

In the reading that we just heard, Saint Peter tells us that we “share Christ’s sufferings.” That’s right, we share the sufferings of the Lord Jesus and those which continue in his people - the Church, the Body of Christ. Let us pray to God for the victims of the crimes that led to this crisis. Do everything you can for the healing of all the victims of these abuses. And pray also for the perpetrators, and for us, your shepherds.

Pope Francis has said that clericalism is at the heart of the causes of this crisis. When we feel that something is out of control, pastors can fall into the temptation of power. But, like we’re just prayed in the canticle, “the Lord God Almighty has assumed His great power.” Seeing him reign in the consciences of the laity, leads us, the priests and bishops, to be accountable to the whole Church and to God! When Christ reigns in your hearts and you take it upon yourselves to expand His kingdom in the world, we become more accountable. Saint Peter also says to us: “Happy are you when you are insulted for the sake of Christ, for then God’s Spirit in its glory has come to rest on you.”

The Spirit does not come to rest upon us so that we can remain passive. He comes to wake us up, to encourage us, to renew us, to inflame our hearts. He comes to enkindle within us a new fire, the fire of the love of God. We need living crosses, crosses with hearts. The world already suffers and we, through the action of the Spirit, are called to place a heart in every cross - in the cross of our Church, in the individual crosses of our brothers and sisters. The Holy Spirit comes to inflame our hearts. When our hearts encounter one another in the name of Jesus, the Holy Spirit causes a fire. Let us set the world on fire with the Holy Spirit. Let us light up the Catholic Church in the United States! Let us not be afraid!

Let us take the initiative! Let us promote encounters in our environments: in our dioceses, our parishes, schools and movements. Let us take advantage of every opportunity for an encounter. Let us not be afraid! Let us not be afraid to encounter others. The Lord will be present there with his Holy Spirit because he is the crucified one, but he is also the Risen one. As the canticle from the book of Revelation says, “May our love for life not deter us from difficulties, temporary setbacks, even from death.” Let us give our lives for the Risen Lord and his kingdom. Let us work to make the love of God present in the world.

The Church needs us today! We are the present and the future of the Church. In these times, only parrhesia, the courage of the baptized, will return to the Church, the Body of Christ, her moral authority. Only parrhesia, the courage, the passionate commitment of the baptized during hard times, will return

to the Church, the Body of Christ, its evangelical spirit and moral authority. Let us enjoy these days in the presence of one another. The Lord Jesus encounters us on our journey together, as he encountered the pilgrims on their way to Emmaus. And may our hearts burn as we listen to His Word, share the Bread of life and grow closer as members of one family.

There is a woman who Pope Francis will beatify on May 4<sup>th</sup>. Her name is Concepción Cabrera, Conchita. She was a Mexican woman, a wife, mother and apostle. She said, "Remember that when they seek you, they find Him." Jesus, our life and our love. The people of Emmaus are looking for us for something, for hope, for care, for forgiveness, for compassion. May they find Him through our life and our love. May Our Lady of Guadalupe, in her maternal love, protect us and give us courage, as she gave it to Saint Juan Diego, to be witnesses of Jesus, his love and his Gospel. He who is among us is the way, the truth, and the life. Long live Christ the King! Long live Christ the King!