

HOMILY AT THE MASS OF INSTALLATION

Most Rev. J. Peter Sartain
Archbishop of Seattle

Cathedral of St. James
December 1, 2010

Brothers and sisters, I have neither gold nor silver to offer you. In fact, I have nothing at all of my own to offer you, for like St. Paul I know that everything I have, I have received. Still, our Lord has sent me to you and commanded that I feed you. And so, very conscious of my weakness and my faults, what I have, I will offer you: the gospel of Jesus Christ, the Gospel who is Jesus Christ.

A few moments ago Archbishop Brunett led me to the cathedral, the chair of Christ the Teacher, and handed me the beautiful – and heavy – crozier, symbol of the local bishop's responsibility to shepherd the flock entrusted to him.

Children often ask the meaning of the crozier. I explain that Jesus is the Good Shepherd, that a bishop is a shepherd in Jesus, and that they are the sheep. The explanation usually satisfies, and we go on to another topic.

But recently I came to an insight into the meaning of the crozier which has given me new awareness of the demands of discipleship and the nearness of the Lord. I noticed one day that when I walk with the crozier in my left hand, I extend it ahead of me, before I take a step – in other words, I noticed that the crozier leads me.

That's the way it should be. The crozier should remind every bishop that it is the Lord Jesus who leads, guides, protects, and nourishes the flock – and that it is first and foremost by following him that we shepherd the portion of the flock entrusted to our care. Thus even though I hold the crozier as a symbol of episcopal authority, I am to follow where the crozier leads: I am to follow Jesus.

Once, when Peter began to argue with Jesus that it would make no sense for him to have to suffer and die (Matthew 16, Mark 8), Jesus responded with that famously enigmatic phrase, “Get behind me, Satan!” – echoing what he had said to Satan himself in the desert (Luke 4). When I picture the scene, I see Jesus walking along a road with the apostles but Peter walking backwards in front of him – literally in Jesus' face – waving his hands in aggravated protest. “That doesn't make sense!” he objected, perhaps in part because he surmised that Jesus' words bore grave implications for him and the others. Recognizing in Peter's words the smoke of Satan's temptation to avoid the cross, Jesus himself protested, “Get behind me, Satan! And you, Peter, how can you follow me if you are in front of me?”

An important aspect of following the lead of the Good Shepherd is that we surrender everything trustingly to him – everything – and consciously follow him throughout the day. It is especially important to bishops, priests, deacons and consecrated religious that Jesus remain literally in our minds and in our hearts at all times, that we recognize he is always *before us* and we are to follow. We bear his image, his mystery, as our gift to those we encounter in the course of the day. Conscious of our awesome call to serve in the name of Jesus, we will continue to ask pardon for the times we have not been faithful to that call, and

especially seek God's healing for his little ones who have been harmed by clergy and others acting in the name of the Church.

God is never stingy, and St. Paul reminds the Ephesians that grace has been given to each of the holy ones due to the immensity of Christ's gift. And so among us are apostles, prophets, evangelists, pastors, teachers, administrators, caregivers, social workers, bookkeepers, housekeepers, cooks, secretaries, counselors, youth ministers, coaches, wives, husbands, mothers, fathers, grandmothers, grandfathers, doctors, nurses – disciples all – and all called to build up the Body of Christ, the Church, by living the truth in love.

In other words, we are in this together because together we are in Christ Jesus. None of us has anything of our own to offer, and so together we follow him to whom we must give everything, so that through us he may give his everything to those we serve.

Pope John Paul II once wrote (in *Radiation of Fatherhood*),

I have decided to eliminate from my vocabulary the word 'my.' How can I use that word when I know that everything is Yours? ...I myself am more "Yours" than 'mine.' So I have learned that I may not say 'mine' of that which is Yours. I may not say, think or feel it. I must free myself, empty myself of this.

The name of Jesus was so powerfully connected to the ministry of the apostles that after being taken into custody for having cured a cripple in his name, Peter and John were eventually released by the officials with a warning "never again to speak to anyone in this name" (Acts 4:17) – to which they replied, "It is impossible for us not to speak about what we have seen and heard" (4:20). It was not much later that the high priest was compelled to remind them, "We gave you strict orders [did we not?] to stop teaching in that name. Yet you have filled Jerusalem with your teaching..." (Acts 5:28).

The name of Jesus should be on our lips in every homily, at every meeting, in every counseling session, at every moment of prayer. His name should be in every parish and school mission statement. As we go through the day, we should pray his name silently to remind ourselves of his nearness and seek his protection. In moments of transition from one task to another, we should pray the name of Jesus, who accompanies us to the next one. At times of confusion and anxiety, we should pray the name of Jesus, who calms every storm. At times of distraction, we should pray the name of Jesus, who brings recollection and order by his love. At times of temptation, we should pray the name of Jesus, for Satan does not like to hear his name and flees. And there is something more: Praying the name of Jesus, we take our place among the leprous and the grieving, the blind and the lame, the sinful and the searching, who cried out to him for help.

Brothers and sisters, in union with our Holy Father Benedict XVI, and with Catholics around the world, we will follow the One whose name we call day and night. We will let him teach us to do the Father's will, form us, correct us, forgive us, love us, be our All. We will proclaim him even when his name meets rejection and ridicule. We would not be the Church were we to be bashful about proclaiming Christ. We have been sent here to western Washington to proclaim Christ, and it is impossible for us not to speak of what we have seen and heard. As St. Paul told the Christians at Rome,

Everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved. But how can they call on him in whom they have not believed? And how can they believe in him of whom they have not heard? And how can they hear without someone to preach? And how can people preach unless they are sent? As it is written, 'How beautiful are the feet of those who bring the good news.' (cf. Romans 10:9-18).

Los antepasados de muchos de ustedes estuvieron aquí antes que la mayoría de nosotros. Ellos dieron testimonio de la voz de Dios e hicieron que esta resuene claramente en su hermosa Creación. Mi corazón también me ha hablado de ustedes y a través de ustedes, de todas las culturas e idiomas en las cuales el Evangelio es proclamado a lo largo de toda la Arquidiócesis. Quizá algunos de ustedes son recién llegados al estado de Washington. ¡Pero no son recién llegados a la Iglesia! Por siglos, Dios ha bendecido a la Iglesia con su testimonio de fe, de piedad y de cultura. Y, ahora, la Arquidiócesis de Seattle es bendecida con su presencia. ¡Dios los ha enviado aquí y la Iglesia los necesita! En todas las culturas, a través de todos los idiomas y, en cada persona humana, Nuestro Padre Celestial revela el rostro de su Hijo amado, para seguir construyendo el Cuerpo de Cristo. ¡Cuánto quisiera poder hablar todos los idiomas que se hablan en la Arquidiócesis de Seattle! Claro que mi cerebro no podría realizar tal hazaña; pero a través del amor de Cristo, mi corazón lo puede hacer. Del mismo modo, el corazón de ustedes también lo puede hacer. Juntos vamos a proclamar que el amor de Dios no conoce barreras de cultura, de idioma ni de nacionalidad.

The ancestors of many of you were here before most of us and gave testimony to the voice of God resounding clearly in his beautiful creation. My heart has also spoken of you and through you, of all the cultures and languages in which the gospel is proclaimed across this archdiocese. Perhaps some of you have arrived recently in the state of Washington. But you are not new to the Church! For centuries God has blessed the Church with your witness of faith, piety and culture. And now the Archdiocese of Seattle is blessed with your presence. God has sent you here, and the Church needs you! In every culture and through

every language and in every human person our heavenly Father reveals the face of his beloved Son in view of building up the body of Christ. I wish that I could speak all the languages spoken in the Archdiocese of Seattle! Clearly my brain can't accomplish such a feat – but through the love of Christ, my heart can. And so can your hearts. Together we will proclaim that the love of God does not know barriers of culture, language, or nationality.

I count it a blessing that my Installation as Archbishop of Seattle takes place at the beginning of Advent, for this is the time when we strive to intensify our hunger for God and admit to the depths of our souls that we need a Savior – that we cannot save ourselves. Dietrich Bonhoeffer once compared Advent to a prison cell “in which one waits and hopes and does various unessential things... but is completely dependent on the fact that the door of freedom has to be opened from the outside.” By his conception in the womb of the Virgin Mary, by his birth, his death, and his resurrection from the dead, the Lord Jesus has opened the door shut by our sin. In just a few weeks, we will pray this antiphon at evening prayer before the Magnificat:

O Key of David, O royal Power of Israel controlling at your will the gate of heaven: come, break down the prison walls of death for those who dwell in darkness and the shadow of death; and lead your captive people into freedom.

As Advent unfolds, many will decorate their homes with a nativity scene, often fittingly called a “manger scene.” The very fact that we are so easily and totally captivated by the manger scene tells us something crucial about the night of Jesus' birth: here was a humble, simple, clear, and unmistakable proclamation of God's love. Love himself took on flesh and blood at the Incarnation, in order to redeem humanity. Already in the manger,

Jesus was laying down his life for us – for lying in that trough where animals fed, he was proclaiming himself our food, our Bread of Life.

My brothers and sisters, I have neither silver nor gold, nor anything of my own to offer you – and yet our Lord has sent me to feed you. My food, your food, is to do the Father's will in his Son, Jesus Christ; to proclaim Christ; to build up the Church; to proclaim the truth in love. Pray that I will be a good Shepherd who watches over the flock with vigilance, who lays down his life for you, and who leads his flock to the pasture where we will feast on the Bread of Life.