

Homily: Catholic Charities Mass-10/13/2016

In St. Paul's letter to the Ephesians, he proclaims that he is an apostle of Jesus Christ, chosen by God and sent into the world to preach forgiveness and redemption. He expresses amazement that he, of all people, would be chosen as part of God's will and his plan to continue the work of building his kingdom.

Tonight we gather to celebrate the mission and many ministries of Catholic Charities of the Archdiocese of San Antonio for the past 75 years. We too are privileged to have been called to do this holy work, following the mystery of God's will. It is indeed a mystery that he would find us worthy to be faithful disciples. With faith and love we are called to preach his Word through the actions of our lives. The many staff and volunteers of Catholic Charities continue as eager disciples, each a part of God's plan, serving in his or her own way and blessing those they serve.

We are called to be holy; to be different from the world. God's universal call to holiness is not a call to isolation, superiority or separation, but instead a call to encounter with the poor, the suffering, the unserved and the underserved around us. In each of these brothers and sisters of ours, we encounter Jesus. In them we find our salvation in the love and mercy that we share with compassion and humility.

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St. Mother Therese of Calcutta always taught that our service springs from our love. We will always call her “Mother” for she taught us how to serve with the gentleness and fullness of maternal love when she said; “We should learn how to give. But we should not regard giving as an obligation, but as a desire. I usually say to our Co-Workers: “I do not need your surplus, I do not want you to give me your leftovers...The poor need your love and your kindness.” This is the spirit reflected in Catholic Charities rich history in which you have participated as faithful witnesses.

In the gospel, Jesus admonishes the scribes and the Pharisees for not living the teachings of the prophets’ proclamation of the will of God. Instead they complicated their message; burdened it with a spirit of legalism, not making it understandable to the people. Their complicated rules did nothing to bring them closer to God. Pope Francis has repeatedly helped us to approach the Word of God with simplicity. He says, “Listening to the Word of God means reading it and then asking, ‘What does this say to me? How does this speak to my heart? What is God saying to me, with this word?’”

So let us reflect on what God is saying to us, tonight; calling us to bring peace to refugees whose lives have been shattered by war; helping single mothers nurture and nourish their children while providing a life

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of dignity and hope; walking many through the legal complexities of a modern world while inviting others to join us in our holy mission by sharing their time, talent, and treasure.

Again we hear God's will in the Holy Father's voice when he says; "Accompanying on its own is not enough. It is not enough to offer someone a sandwich unless it is accompanied by the possibility of learning how to stand on one's own two feet. Charity that leaves the poor person as he is; is not sufficient. True mercy, the mercy God gives to us and teaches us, demands justice; it demands that the poor find the way to be poor no longer."