

Missionaries of Our Lady of Perpetual Help

08-10-19

Dear Sisters and friends of this wonderful community, I am so blessed and so grateful to be with you this morning. The blessing of this residence is more than a mere prayer for the building. Rather, it is a moment of consecration in missionary service according to the charisms of the Missionary Sisters of Our Lady of Perpetual Help. Ever since your foundation in Mexico in the last century you have dedicated yourselves in service to the poor and needy by bringing them not only physical comfort and hope, but even more, the comfort of the Good News of Jesus Christ. In this way your community anticipated the great call of the Second Vatican Council to go out into the world with the Gospel. You anticipated what Pope St. Paul VI would call the New Evangelization, and you remain faithful to this calling!

Today, as we bless this residence and its community, we are celebrating the Feast of St. Laurence, Deacon and Martyr. It is appropriate that our dedication should occur on this feast day, for St. Laurence is most famous for his recognition that the poor were, in fact, the Church's real treasure! During the terrible persecutions in the City of Rome in the year 258, the Deacon Laurence witnessed the martyrdom of Pope Sixtus II. Before his execution, the Holy Father instructed Laurence, who was the administrator for the Church of Rome, to sell the Church's possessions and distribute the proceeds to the poor. When the soldiers came to arrest him they

demanded that he take them to the place where the Church's possessions were kept. He took the soldiers into the streets of the City, and, pointing to the poor huddled there, he told the soldiers that these poor were the Church's wealth! He was taken immediately and burned on a grill.

Hopefully none of us will be called to so direct a witness, martyrdom, in this way. However, it is our great joy and consolation to have the same calling of service and evangelization as St. Laurence and those martyrs of the early Church. We don't seek persecution, but neither shall we shrink from our great calling to serve and bring good news.

Early in his Pontificate, our Holy Father Pope Francis made this observation to a group of women religious. He said, "I want to say one word to you and this word is *joy!* Wherever consecrated people are, there is always joy!" (Pope Francis, 2014). For me, as Archbishop in the local Church of San Antonio, you are a source of joy! I am so grateful you are here! I am so grateful for the presence of your distinct charism as you enrich our Church with your presence! I pray that as we consecrate and bless this new residence for you, you will feel the joy of your calling!

St. Paul, in today's first reading has said, "God is able to make every grace abundant for you, so that in all things, always having all you need, you may have an abundance for every good work." I haven't any doubt that God, our loving Father, has called you to be here, beautiful daughters of the Church! Moreover, I haven't any

doubt that God will bless your ministry and offer you an “abundance for every good work.”

As we celebrate the Holy Eucharist today let us rejoice in our calling, let us recall with humble hearts the witness of St. Laurence, and let us, through the blessing of this new residence, take the opportunity to rededicate ourselves to the service of the poor and spreading the Good News! Amen!