

**Homily – Tuesday of Fifth Week of Easter
Archbishop’s Medallion Mass and Reception – April 30, 2024**

Together with the Superintendent, Marty West, your Principals, teachers and parents, I am very happy to be with you on this important date, to unite the effort that you have made – and which today has earned you honors – to the sacrifice of the Lord for our salvation. Congratulations! Most importantly, at this celebration, everything receives a new and powerful meaning. Your reception of the Archbishop’s Medallion should highlight your witness to the Lord’s call to cultivate your talents, and to place them at the service of his mission.

Worthwhile work brings with it obstacles and weariness. From the book of Genesis, we read: *“By the sweat of your brow you shall eat bread, until you return to the ground, from which you were taken...”* (Gn 3:19). For that reason, Jesus, our Savior, encourages us not to *“work for food that perishes but for the food that endures for eternal life...”* (Jn 6:27). As we heard in our first reading, Saint Paul was a living witness to his faith in the Lord, who Himself is our food for eternal life.

Witnessing to Jesus triggers crises, misunderstandings, and persecutions. There are always those who want to suffocate the announcement of the Good News, both in Saint Paul’s time and in ours, either with stones or with slander. Jesus had already announced this when He said: *“This I command you: love one another. If the world hates you, realize that it hated me first.”* (Jn 15:17-18). Paul, a tireless preacher, does not give up on his mission even after a stoning in which he is left for dead. He moves on.

Saint Paul was always strong-willed, even when he persecuted Christians. However, after he had a life-changing encounter with Jesus, his will became stronger even beyond human understanding. The force of the Holy Spirit working within him was unstoppable. To this day, we look back to him as an example of what it means to be a missionary disciple of Jesus. He is a pillar of the Church.

Someone who truly knows Jesus, is certain that in the end everything will be all right. It is worth making every effort in life to fulfill the mission that God entrusts to us, and through which he makes us partakers in the mission of his Son Jesus. The Lord will pour the gifts of the Holy Spirit into our hearts to sustain us in every trial for the faithful fulfillment of his will, as we forget about our own interests, encouraging others and inviting them to persevere in faith.

All members of the Body of Christ – which is the Church – are called to convey the truth about Jesus, which gives life a new meaning that reaches to heaven. The ancient Christian communities witnessed that anyone, anywhere in society, can offer themselves for the expansion of the Lord’s Kingdom. The Kingdom of Christ is not like those of this world. Jesus said: *“Peace I leave with you; my peace I give to you. (...) Do not let your hearts be troubled or afraid.”* (Jn). Pope Francis reminds us that *“the Lord’s call makes us bearers of a promise and, at the same time, asks of us the courage to take a risk, with him and for him.”* Have courage to encounter and follow Jesus!

May Our Lady of Guadalupe allow you to feel the peace of her comforting embrace, so you may find the courage to be bearers of the Good News in everything you do.