

Homily, Closing Mass of the General Assembly Association of the Miraculous Medal

Sunday, 9 November 2014

G. Gregory Gay, C.M.

My brothers and sisters in Jesus, St. Vincent, and Mary, our Mother:

I began with a quote from scripture best captures our time together: “*Lord, is it good for us to be here!*” (Mt. 17:4). Although these are the words of Peter to Jesus at the Transfiguration, they express what I believe we all feel as we conclude our time together in this first General Assembly of the Association of the Miraculous Medal. Yes, it is good for us to be here!

But as devotees of our Blessed Mother, we cannot bask in the beauty of this graced time forever. Like the disciples on Mount Tabor, we must move forward in faith. Our theme for this General Assembly-and what an Assembly it has been- is the *New Evangelization*. It is the right theme for the right time! Today, our world is in great need of the light of Christ and the intercession of Mary, his Mother.

By his life, death, and resurrection, Jesus showed us the way to salvation. Yet, where did Jesus first learn to love, serve, and sacrifice? Like all of us, his pathway to holiness of life began as a young child. His first and best teachers were Mary and Joseph. Together, they took Jesus into their lives and taught him in the way of faith. In Joseph’s dedication to his family and Mary’s gentle, maternal love, they readied Jesus to bring God’s salvation to a waiting world. Those early years of Jesus, shrouded in mystery, are what Blessed Pope Paul VI called the *School of Nazareth*. He spoke of it as “*a school of prayer where we learn to listen... and to penetrate the deepest meaning of the manifestation of the Son of God, drawing our example from Mary, Joseph, and Jesus*” (Pope Paul VI, “Nazareth,” January 5, 1964).¹

Because of the *School of Nazareth*, we are today a Christian community and a Vincentian Family. In every age, God raises up new disciples as evangelizers to lead people to Christ. Mary has done so by

¹ From the Office of Readings, Feast of the Holy Family, Liturgy of the Hours, Volume I: Advent and Christmas.

her many apparitions, offering messages of prayer, repentance, and faith in her Son. While the *New Evangelization* may seem a novelty, its call is issued anew in each age. It is best understood in these words of Our Lady to St. Catherine: "*Come to the foot of the altar, and you will receive many graces.*"

That simple message is not only to find a place at the altar of the Lord, but also to embrace a way of life that witnesses to love of God and care of neighbor. However, Mary's call to Catherine to *come to the foot of the altar* is an invitation for us to be nourished by the Eucharist, God's Word, seeking his Divine will, and devotion to his Mother.

Our Lady gave St. Catherine a valuable tool to evangelize. It was not a profound doctrine, but a simple medal. Her instruction: have the medal struck and urge people to wear it as a sign of faith in Jesus. Simply put, the Medal depicts the story of our salvation and the victory over death and sin won by Jesus and modeled by the sinless life of Mary. The medal is striking because Our Lady herself presented the design to Catherine. The front depicts Mary standing on a globe with the head of a serpent beneath her feet. Framed around it is our prayer, "O Mary, conceived without sin, pray for us who have recourse to thee." On the reverse, twelve stars surround a large "M," from which a cross arises. Below the "M," there are medals that depict the two flaming sacred hearts of Jesus and Mary.

The title "Miraculous Medal" did not originate from Our Lady or St. Catherine, but by public acclamation. After praying for Mary's intercession and wearing the medal, people began to experience in their lives the gifts and graces of this devotion. Its effects were more than they thought possible. The Miraculous Medal witnesses to God's love and the endless reservoir of Mary's intercession. It is evangelization in action.

If any group in the Church today should welcome and strive to be in the forefront of the "New Evangelization", it is we, the members of the Association of the Miraculous Medal. We know of graces received through Mary's loving intercession lead us to her Son's redemptive power. This Medal and the works of our Association lead us into deeper discipleship with Jesus and Mary, the first agents of evangelization.

Our Holy Father, in his Apostolic Exhortation *Evangelii Gaudium*, has called Our Blessed Mother the "Star of the New Evangelization." Pope Francis tells us why: "*With the Holy Spirit, Mary is always present in the midst of the people. She joined the disciples in praying for the coming of the Holy Spirit (Acts 1:14) and thus made possible the missionary outburst which took place at Pentecost. She is the Mother of the Church, which evangelizes, and without her we could never truly understand the spirit of the new evangelization*" (EG, 284).

Pope Francis verifies the value of Mary's Medal and our Association when he notes, "*There is a Marian 'style' to the Church's work of evan-*

gelization. Whenever we look to Mary, we come to believe in the revolutionary nature of love and tenderness. In her, we see that humility and tenderness are not virtues of the weak but of the strong... Mary is able to recognize the traces of God's Spirit in events great and small. She constantly contemplates the mystery of God in our world, in human history and in our daily lives" (EG, 288).

That is why we gather at this Eucharist as we conclude our time together: to be reminded of who we are, and to be sent forth as a Christian people to be bearers of the Good News of Jesus. As we hear God's Word, receive him in the Eucharist, offer our prayers, and prepare to return home, let us be grateful for our time together. May Our Lady of the Miraculous Medal intercede for us and continue watch over the Association, as she has done for centuries. I will close with part of a prayer Pope Francis offered at the conclusion of *Evangelii Gaudium*:

***Mary, Star of the new evangelization,
help us to bear radiant witness to communion,
service, ardent and generous faith, justice, and love of the poor,
that the joy of the Gospel may reach to the ends of the earth,
illuminating even the fringes of our world.
Mother of the living Gospel,
wellspring of happiness for God's little ones, pray for us.
Amen. Alleluia!***