

# **Graduation Liturgy of the Pontifical John Paul II Institute for Studies on Marriage and the Family**

## **Homily of Bishop John Barres**

### **Redemptor Hominis Church of the Saint John Paul II National Shrine**

**May 9, 2023**

Class of 2023 of the Pontifical John Paul II Institute for Studies on Marriage and the Family: I want to thank you and your families for the sacrifices you have made for the Risen Christ and for the mission of mercy of the Catholic Church expressed in your prayerful dedication to the objective truths of the Church's teaching on marriage and the family.

In the 14<sup>th</sup> Chapter of the Acts of the Apostles, we see the great missionary St. Paul stoned, dragged out of the city and left for dead.

St. Paul's missionary mysticism expressed in Galatians 2:20 – "It is no longer I who live, but Christ who lives in me" – flows through the mysterious power of Christ's Cross.

Experiencing beatings, shipwrecks, stonings, thorns in his flesh, rejection and ultimately martyrdom, St. Paul boasted in the Cross of Christ.

He knew that all of his missionary charisms flowed through the Cross of Christ.

Take St. Paul as a critical intercessor as you take your next steps in contemplating the radiant Face of the Risen Christ and in serving the Church and the world.

You will need St. Paul's mysticism and missionary spirit. You will need his courage and love for the Cross

To stand up in charity, humility and mercy for the truths of our Catholic Faith pertaining to marriage, family and anthropology will require a Pauline spirit. It will

require a deep interior life to persevere and grow in your contemplative missionary charism.

It is essential that you see the unity and harmony of Catholic truth expressed in the unity of the Church's spiritual and moral theology, the unity of deep contemplative prayer and virtuous Paschal Mystery action.

In his book *Contemplative Ethics*, Redemptorist moral theologian Fr. Dennis Billy, CSSR, states: "The task for moral theology today is to foster an ongoing integration of spirituality and morality, contemplation and action, goodness and holiness in the lives of the people it seeks to serve."<sup>1</sup>

Class of 2023: Call on the Holy Spirit to teach you to pray! Call on the Holy Spirit to lead you to contemplative, theological and catechetical depth!

The interior life nourished in consistent periods of silence in which we invest our minds, hearts, souls and imaginations cultivates a deep and consistent interior peace.

In John 14, Our Lord says: "Peace I leave with you; my peace I give to you." Our Lord's Resurrection appearances are characterized by this greeting.

Fear and locked doors surrender to love and bold witness to the Risen Christ.

The peace that radiates from a person's face, a face that contemplates the Face of Christ, moves hearts and reflects a heart ablaze with love. The contemplative peace that radiates from your face as you explain and teach the Church's moral truths naturally evangelizes.

CS Lewis once said that the most productive people on earth are those who have a burning desire for Heaven, a burning desire for Eternal Life.

St. Paul tells us "eyes have not seen, ears have not heard what God has prepared for those who love him." (1 Corinthians 2:9)

Cardinal Merry Del Val (1865-1930), the Secretary of State for Pope St. Pius X (1835-1914), says: "Receive everything from Christ and your life will be the first stanza of an eternal hymn, the dawn of a happiness without sunset."

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<sup>1</sup> Fr. Dennis J. Billy, CSSR, *Contemplative Ethics: An Introduction*, (New York: Paulist Press, 2011), xi-xii.

The light of a burning desire for Eternal Life stokes and motivates the heroism, courage, Spirit-driven discipline and perseverance of our interior lives.

In *The Day is Now Far Spent*, Cardinal Robert Sarah sees the relationship between faith, prayer and silence. He writes: “Faith grows in an intense life of prayer and contemplative silence. It is nourished and strengthened in a daily face-to-face meeting with God and in an attitude of adoration and silent contemplation. It is professed in the Creed, celebrated in the liturgy, lived out in keeping the Commandments. It achieves its growth through an interior life of adoration and prayer. Faith is nourished by the liturgy, by Catholic doctrine, and by the Church’s tradition as a whole. Its principal sources are Sacred Scripture, the Fathers of the Church, and the Magisterium.”<sup>2</sup>

Authentic contemplation requires a house built on the rock of objective truth. Similarly, authentic contemplation must rest on the objective truths of Catholic moral teaching.

By contrast, the distorted philosophical underpinnings of moral relativism destroy any authentic approach to prayer and contemplation. Prayer that is based on a house built on the shifting sands of moral relativism collapses quickly.<sup>3</sup>

In *The Intellectual Life: Its Spirit, Conditions, Methods*, A.D. Sertillanges, OP, writes: “Every truth is a fragment which does not stand alone but reveals connections on every side. Truth in itself is one, and the Truth is God.”<sup>4</sup>

Catholic saints, mystics and martyrs of every age, every century and every world and Church crisis in history teach us that the process of living the Paschal Mystery – the Passion, Death and Resurrection of Jesus Christ – in prayer requires dying to ourselves and rising in holiness and contemplative concentration in prayer.

Minds, hearts, and souls on fire with Christ make the lasting marks and provide the lasting inspiration on salvation and world history.

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<sup>2</sup> Robert Cardinal Sarah (with Nicolas Diat), *The Day Is Now Far Spent*, (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 2019), 26.

<sup>3</sup> For an effective analysis of the interdependence of Spiritual Theology and Moral Theology, see the works of Fr. Dennis J. Billy, CSSR: *Spirituality & Morality: Integrating Prayer and Action*, (New York: Paulist Press, 1996); *Conscience and Prayer: The Spirit of Catholic Moral Theology*, (Collegeville, MN: The Liturgical Press, 2001); *Contemplative Ethics: An Introduction*, (New York: Paulist Press, 2011).

<sup>4</sup> A.D. Sertillanges, OP, *The Intellectual Life: Its Spirit, Conditions, Methods*, (Cork: The Mercier Press, 1965), 30. The Catholic University of America Press republished this classic work in 1992.

In *Rejoice and Be Glad*, Pope Francis says: “Do not be afraid of holiness. It will take away none of your energy, vitality or joy (32)...The Lord wants us to be saints and not to settle for a bland and mediocre existence (1)...Holiness is the most attractive face of the Church (9)...The Church needs passionate missionaries, enthusiastic about sharing true life. The saints surprise us, they confound us, because by their lives they urge us to abandon a dull and dreary mediocrity (138).”

Your graduation occurs at a time of Eucharistic Revival in the United States.

So just as there is a connection and unity of truth between spiritual and moral theology, so too there is a critical connection and unity of truth between liturgical and moral theology.

In *Deus Caritas Est* 14, Pope Benedict XVI called us to a “sacramental mysticism” that is “social in character” and *agape* driven.

Harnessing the power of the Mass and rediscovering the vertical or worship dimension of the Catholic liturgy and harnessing this “sacramental mysticism” leads the Church to a dynamic Marriage and Family, Gospel of Life and Social Justice witness and mission.

We recognize that our capacity to be missionary disciples of the Lord rests on us being on Fire with the Word of God and on Fire with the Catholic Mass and the Eucharist.

With the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops, our parishes, dioceses, universities and institutions are deeply engaged in an evangelizing “Eucharistic Revival.”

What do we mean by the phrase “Eucharistic Revival”?

In his 2003 encyclical *Ecclesia de Eucharistia*, Pope St. John Paul II said that he wanted each of us “to rekindle our Eucharistic Amazement”<sup>5</sup> and to once again realize that every Mass has a “cosmic character”<sup>6</sup> and that every Mass “is celebrated on the Altar of the World.”<sup>7</sup>

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<sup>5</sup> Pope John Paul II’s April 17, 2003 encyclical *Ecclesia de Eucharistia* (*On the Eucharist*), 6.

<sup>6</sup> *Ecclesia de Eucharistia* 8.

<sup>7</sup> *Ecclesia de Eucharistia* 8.

Eucharistic Revival is an effective catechesis of the theology and spirituality of the Catholic Mass that moves the hearts, minds, souls and imaginations of the People of God.

Eucharistic Revival is a rekindling of Pope Benedict XVI's insight that every period of Church reform and effective Catholic evangelization and mission throughout history can be traced to a rediscovery of the Real Presence of Jesus Christ, Body, Blood, Soul and Divinity in the Holy Eucharist.<sup>8</sup>

Pope Benedict, of course, would remind us that a Eucharistic Revival requires a Biblical Revival since all of our Catholic theology and spirituality of the Catholic Mass and the Eucharist are grounded in the Sacred Scriptures.

In his Apostolic Exhortation *The Word of the Lord*, Pope Benedict writes: "Word and Eucharist are so deeply bound together that we cannot understand one without the other: the Word of God sacramentally takes flesh in the event of the Eucharist. The Eucharist opens us to an understanding of Scripture, just as Scripture for its part illumines and explains the mystery of the Eucharist."

The daily rhythm of your vocations, your future contributions to the mission of the Church, your service to missionary marriages and families, is a Biblical rhythm, a Eucharistic rhythm and a Missionary rhythm.

Evangelizing Catholic moral theology effectively expressed in truth, mercy and charity always flows through the inspired Word of God and the Paschal Mystery expressed in the Catholic Mass.

May the Word of God and the Eucharist be a light and a lamp for your service to the Church and the World. (Ps. 119)

May the Eucharist be the true way of all your loves upon earth. (Tolkien)

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<sup>8</sup> See Pope Benedict XVI's 2017 Apostolic Exhortation *Sacramentum Caritatis* 6: "Every great reform has in some way been linked to the rediscovery of belief in the Lord's eucharistic presence among his people."

