

October 25, 2022

Farewell Mass – Little Sisters of the Poor in Denver
Archbishop Samuel J. Aquila's Homily

Today, we gather together to lift up our hearts in gratitude to the Father for the Little Sisters of the Poor and the apostolate and the ministry they provided for 105 years in the Archdiocese of Denver at Mullen Home. They truly were great witnesses to the Gospel of Jesus Christ. One never knows when one begins a ministry and an apostolate and the fruit that it bears, as to how long it will continue. And yet, in the time that they served here, they served thousands of the elderly with love, with gentleness, with care in living out the first reading and the Gospel for today.

In the first reading from the book of the Prophet Isaiah, the Lord reminds the people of Isaiah's time and our time that we are to be those who care for those who are hungry, oppressed, the naked and those who are poor and reaching out to them. And the Lord tells us that when we carry out that virtue of charity that the light, your light, shall break forth like the dawn and your wound shall quickly be healed. And the Little Sisters of the Poor were very much that light of Christ within our Archdiocese. They were ones who healed the wounds of the elderly and reached out to them. But, also healed the wounds of families who were unable to care for their loved ones. And, they lived that passage. And the Lord reminds us that in the midst of it, He is present. He will say when He hears the cry for help "Here I am."

And in their deep love for the Eucharist, in their love for the Mass, and their love for adoration and their love for prayer – it was Jesus Christ who sustained them in their apostolate. He gave them the strength that they needed as He promised. He will renew your strength. But, they also gave that strength to the elderly for whom they cared. And of their love for them - the elderly at Mullen Home. And in the times that I visited Mullen, they always knew that they were loved. And they always cared for them in a very deep and compassionate way. And, I can remember even in the midst of COVID, going over and visiting and the Sisters had made sure that the patients, that the Residents, that they were far enough away; but they could see each other at least in the hallways and corridors. And they could talk to one another. They weren't completely isolated in their rooms as so many older people experienced isolation during COVID. And that meant a tremendous amount for them and it gave great witness to the care that the Sisters would give. And through the decades of that 105 years they provided mercy, they provided love, they provided compassion and they journeyed with people through their

death. And in that, assuring them of eternal life and that our Lord is faithful to His promises.

And even elderly who no longer had blood family members, they knew that they had church family. They knew that they belonged to the family at Mullen Home. And it was through the generosity of the Mullens who made all of that possible. That, when they donated the home and the Little Sisters agreed to come, they desired for that type of carrying out and living out the Beatitudes. And, that people who were destitute and elderly would know the love of God and receive that love.

And so, there is certainly sadness in our hearts to see the Little Sisters depart. But, there is also deep gratitude for the ministry and witness they provided throughout those 105 years. The Lord reminds us in the Beatitudes that we are to be poor in Spirit; meek; merciful; clean of heart; peacemakers. And, in living those Beatitudes, the Little Sisters of the Poor gave great witness to Jesus Christ and would lead others to that encounter with Christ. They would help others to see the elderly particularly who lived there. That the Kingdom of Heaven would be theirs the more that they depended on Christ; the more that they surrendered their life to Christ. And as they lived out their vows of Poverty, Chastity and Obedience and as they lived out their apostolate, one could see their meekness; that they were truly merciful and that they knew their own poverty by trusting in the Lord and surrendering to Him. And we too are called as Disciples in the times in which we live to live out the Beatitudes. To be those who in our encounter with Jesus Christ to know that we are accompanied by Christ and that He is with us. That He is faithful to His promises. And the Lord, too, reminds us in the Second Reading from the first letter of Saint John that the way that we know the love of God is that we come to that love because He laid down His life for us. And so, we ought to lay down our lives for our brothers and sisters. And the Sisters lived that message, in laying down their lives and in giving everything, and leaving everything. And, some of them even came from France, especially early on, and left their families, their homes – everything they've known in order to serve. And that is putting Christ first within our lives. And the Lord reminds us and Saint John reminds us in his letter that if someone who has worldly means sees a brother in need and refuses his compassion, how can the love of God remain in him. And let us love not in word and speech, but in deed and in truth. And, that is precisely what the Little Sisters did – they loved in deed and in truth. They were faithful to the truth of the Gospel and living that out in their daily life.

And so, as we continue in our celebration of the Eucharist today, I encourage you my sisters and brothers to reflect upon how these readings are speaking to your

own hearts. First, let us lift up our hearts in gratitude for the great witness and light of Christ that the Little Sisters of the Poor and their faith in Jesus Christ provided to this Diocese for 105 years. Let us also pray for the former Residents because it was not easy for them to receive the news that Mullen Home was closing. And, we too, must remember them in our prayers, holding them up to the Lord because they are mourning the loss of the Sisters. And in that, as they mourn, we too must remember the words of Jesus in giving us the Beatitudes. He reminds us, Blest are they who mourn, for they will be comforted. It is never good to deny the sadness that we have in our hearts in seeing Mullen Home close. Or, the sadness that the elderly has in seeing it close. But, we trust in Jesus Christ and we trust in the Lord that He will raise up a new apostolate; something that will help us to reach out, especially to the elderly.

And so, let us ask the Lord to help us; to give us His plan for the future of Mullen Home. What that may be, we do not know yet. But, all of us must pray and turn to the Holy Spirit and ask for the Spirit's guidance. For I am certain in Faith that the Lord has got a definite plan. And we must listen to the voice of the Spirit as to what that is and trust in the Spirit. Just as the Sisters trusted 105 years ago coming here. Think about how little they had and the very real difference that was 105 years ago. When I heard that, I thought to myself, my parents weren't even born yet. And yet, they came in trust and now, too, they leave in trust.

And so, let us open our hearts; let us hear the invitation of the Beatitudes and let us ask the Lord to help us to be faithful to living those Beatitudes and trusting our Lord Jesus Christ in putting Him first in our hearts and in our minds; in our daily lives and living out the Gospel. Being a witness to Him like the Sisters have done in their time here.