

Christ Our Life
Homilía
21 de Septiembre, 2014
Español

Estamos todos muy agradecidos por la inspiración y la perspectiva con que nos ha bendecido esta hermosa conferencia.

Al llegar a su conclusión, despedámonos con una consciencia plena de que “Cristo es Nuestra Vida.” La palabra clave es Nuestra. No solamente tenemos dentro al Cristo individual sino que él es común para todos, por lo cual juntos conformamos el Cuerpo de Cristo.

Esto lo hacemos de dos maneras.

- Crecemos en oración y en comunidad por medio de la Eucaristía Parroquial y compartiendo nuestra fe en grupos pequeños y en el estudio de la biblia. Al crecer en los caminos de Dios damos testimonio a los demás sobre la mente y el corazón de Dios.
- Dios también nos llama a poner la fe en acción en nuestro apoyo misericordioso a todos los hijos de Dios. Estamos llamados a organizarnos en este llamado a servir para que el servicio sea efectivo

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You and I rejoice in the grace-filled experience that has been ours these last two days. Aided by humor, Cardinal Dolan struck the perfect chord when he insisted on the absolute centrality of Christ in our entire existence. We were subsequently blessed with an array of riveting speakers -- Father Larry Richards, Angela Perez Baraquio Grey, Mark Hart, Mario St. Francis Herrera, Immaculée Ilibagiza, Magnus MacFarlane-Barrow, Tony Meléndez, Tom Peterson and Steve Angrisano who framed the reality so convincingly that it is now bone deep in each of us. Christ is Our Life.

In the scriptures proclaimed today, Paul testifies to the Philippians, “For to me Christ is Life.” Paul echoes the experience of the first disciples of Jesus: “Jesus is the Christ. He is the Son of the Living God. He has the words of everlasting life.” But what if the early followers simply relished those first encounters with the living God but then kept the message to themselves as privileged and private? They might contend God, in all wisdom, has spoken exclusively to us.

Instinctively they knew as we know that the revelation of Christ is not limited to the individual. It is intended to be proposed to all creation with a heartfelt invitation to participate. It is destined to be shared with all believers and by all who acknowledge God through the outreach of love. Through us, gathered as Church, Christ is magnified. His Body reaches where we go. So central to this understanding is the three letter word essential to the title of this Conference. Namely OUR. Christ Our Life. After me, in clear-throated voice let it be known who we are: Christ Our Life. Everyone together: Christ Our Life.

Inevitably, we will leave this conference in high spirits, bursting with enthusiasm, eager to release pent-up energy. We must ask, but what am I best to do with this energy the Holy Spirit has stirred up in me? Better yet, what are WE to do? – after all, Christ is Our life. Hopefully, these days will not fade into a pleasant memory drifting off into faint recollection some six months from now. Rather may they prove to be a decisive moment activating a new perspective for us that penetrates our outlook.

As Paul and all saints, many of whom are among us today, can testify, conversion and transformation of heart involve allowing Christ to enter into the very fabric of our being and capture it. Anyone authentically connected with Christ will say, but I am not the same person after their

encounter with the living God. Indeed we are not. For we leave behind that which is selfish and even down right evil and take on God's ways and God's thoughts. We become entirely new persons, persons filled with joy. We experience personal peace, a peace which overcomes human restlessness as St. Augustine observes. We arrive at such peace only by resting in God.

This experience of Christ is not engaged in isolation. Today, many would profess that they are spiritual but not religious. But does this not mean that their prayer and relationship with the spiritual reality is accomplished in front of a mirror?

Jesus initiated his ministry with a band of disciples who had to struggle to digest his message. This group eventuated into the first community of believers. It was said of the early Christians "See how they love one another." Outsiders found them appealing because their way of life was meaningful and dedicated. Their vision was magnetic drawing others into this burgeoning community.

As we now move into our daily world may we be conscious of our identity as the People of God and the Body of Christ. Our principal expression of this will be our parish Eucharist community where through the nourishment of the scriptures and the Eucharist we become ever

more united in the one Christ who is Our Life. As happened on Pentecost, at the price of great striving and patience, we seek to be truly inclusive.

A group of parishioners attending the Conference has laid the groundwork for continuing this experience by keeping alive and expanding the insights they have gained. Others of you will establish bible studies and faith sharing groups. Tremendously powerful programs that unleash rivers of grace are Christ Renews His Parish and similarly designed efforts. Also the Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults, RCIA is very compelling. It is in coming together, that we encounter and grow in the one Christ. “Where two or three are gathered in my name, there am I in their midst.”

On October 19th the Diocese of Des Moines in a spirit of unity will launch the “Year of Marriage and Family.” This theme coincides with that of the Extraordinary and Ordinary Synods which Pope Francis has called for this year and next. From creation, God has blessed the marital union of one man, Adam, and one woman, Eve, as the foundation of human existence modeled after the relationship God has with the human race. Moreover, the family is the cornerstone of society whereby young people experience the first taste of god’s love through Mother, Father and siblings and are formed in such a way to engage values essential to

authentic human life. I encourage all in our Des Moines diocesan community to enter into the activity of this year of Marriage and Family and recommit to and solidify this central institution of our lives. At the center of marriage and family, as always, is Christ.

The powerful support of shared prayer and the strength and hope it generates were brought home to me in a recent visit to an internally displaced persons' camp in Juba, South Sudan. This particular enclosure houses 10,000 refugees in a tiny space. These innocent victims had fled the scourge of war and terror. They lived in tents and other makeshift housing in the camp. They were upon one another with little or no privacy amid sickness and poor hygiene and sanitary provisions. Deep in the camp settlement, I came upon a tent with about 20 women who were singing and dancing in beautiful apparel to the theme "Alleluia, the Lord Jesus is our salvation, he will deliver us." Through this prayer and powerful expression, they transcended their pitiful circumstances and down loaded the possibility of hope and eventual change. Not only did they touch their own souls but those of the whole camp truly espousing Christ OUR life. They did wonders for me as I walked in this desperate situation.

Today's Gospel befuddles most of us. We identify with an objective justice that insists on one hour's pay for one hour's work. But the

parable of the vineyard workers portrays equal pay for those who worked throughout the day and those who worked only one hour. Once again, God's ways are not our ways. This parable introduces us into God's incomparable generosity. In his world all of us are daughters and sons deeply beloved by him. He wants to bestow his abundant goodness on all no matter what.

For us who say our life is that of Christ, the Gospel challenges us to melt our hardened hearts and fashion them into the generous heart of our creator. Pope Francis, since assuming the role of Peter a year and a half ago, has challenged us to action. Faith is expected to see its fulfillment in charity, in a love that is inclusive.

In *the Joy of the Gospel*, the Pope directs: "Each Christian and every community must discern what the Lord points out, that all of us are asked to go forth from our own comfort zone in order to reach all the "peripheries" in need of the light of the Gospel." (#20)

As we leave Wells Fargo, the generosity of God takes on a face through us. In the first place, we are to be imbued with the Gospel of Christ that God's word is so penetrating it becomes interchangeable with us. Together, we are called to make Jesus Christ known and loved by choosing to live out the Gospel at every moment.

The generosity of God, however, is especially directed to the poor, the suffering, the alienated, victims of injustice, and persons who have lost their way in sin but whom God continues to seek out and embrace as the Good Shepherd with the warmth of the divine heart. The characteristic of God that has been highlighted by both St. John Paul II and Pope Francis is Mercy. In *Joy of the Gospel*, Pope Francis cites St. Thomas Aquinas who explains: “As far as external works are concerned, mercy is the greatest of all virtues: “in itself mercy is the greatest virtue, since all the others revolve around it.””

Again, in testimony that Christ is OUR life, Pope Benedict in his encyclical *Deus Caritas Est* states that in order for love to be effective it must be organized. Thus, our parish communities along with organizations such as Catholic Charities, Catholic Relief Services, the St. Vincent de Paul Society, Just Faith, Inner Visions and all organizations that promote the dignity of human life from the moment of conception until natural death, are designed to organize us so that the corporate impact of Christ can be significant.

A consideration that Pope Francis notes as he pushes us to move to action in service of God’s lowly ones is that we are not a non-governmental agency. An NGO is typically organized on a secular

model to reach out in humanitarian assistance to those in need. Rather, Church members are motivated by our relationship with Christ, moving out with heartfelt compassion and love to assert the dignity and life of every human person, deeply revered by God with a transcendent dignity. We are agents of manifesting and communicating Christ's life. Pope Francis states: "Before all else, the Gospel invites us to respond to the God of love who saves us, to see God in others and to go forth from ourselves to seek the God of others."

All of us through God's grace and the exceptional leadership and organization of the Christ Our Life committee have profited individually in some manner from this conference. Gratitude fills our hearts.

But even more so, as we go forth, we do so as a community, as God's priestly people, united in his love – to share the powerful Joy of the Gospel as the Body of Christ. And so, repeat after me once again – who is our life blood? Christ Our Life.