

**HOMILY OF HIS EMINENCE CARDINAL CHRISTOPHE PIERRE
APOSTOLIC NUNCIO TO THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA
HOLY MASS FOR SATURDAY OF THE FIFTH WEEK OF EASTER
21ST ANNUAL ASIAN AND PACIFIC ISLAND CATHOLICS MARIAN PILGRIMAGE
BASILICA OF THE NATIONAL SHRINE OF THE IMMACULATE CONCEPTION
WASHINGTON, D.C. – MAY 4, 2024**

Dear Friends in Christ,

Greetings and welcome! As the Pope’s personal representative to the Church in the United States, I am pleased to convey to all of you the spiritual closeness and paternal affection of Pope Francis. Last month, the Holy See announced that the Pope will travel to the Asia Pacific region in September. We look forward to this encounter between the successor of Peter and some of the peoples of the region where you and your families have their origin. I am grateful that you have traveled here, to this National Basilica. Know that the faith that you bring from your many different homelands in Asia and the Pacific Islands is an enrichment to the people of this country.

Your faith shows the fruit of the missionary activity which has been essential to the Church’s identity from the very beginning. Saint Paul was the great missionary of the first Christian generation. Always he was seeking new paths on which to advance the Gospel. In today’s passage he reached Derbe and Lystra, drawing more people to the mission. And when the Holy Spirit prevented them from going certain places, Paul and his companions continued to seek new openings. Then, a momentous event occurs: Paul has a vision which beckons him across the sea to Macedonia. For the first time, the saving message of Christ will be preached on the European continent. A whole new era is begun – something that affects our lives profoundly to this day. From Europe, the Gospel eventually spread to the rest of the world, including to Asia and the islands of the Pacific, as well as to the Americas. And now, in our own day, your families and you have come both to Europe and to the United States, where your presence and your faith are a gift to the Church in these lands.

“Let all the earth cry out to God with joy.” This is the summons from today’s Psalm. For what reason does “all the earth” raise this joyful cry to God? Because the joy of the Gospel has spread to all corners of the world. And when we praise God together, as people from different parts of the world, from different language groups, and from different ethnic backgrounds, that prayer of praise becomes all the greater. It is a living testimony to the harmony and diversity which strengthens and makes more beautiful the Body of Christ.

Joy is essential to the Good News. And rejoice we must, because in joy we must find our strength. Strength is needed to be Catholic in this world. As Jesus said to his disciples, he was hated by some in this world; and if that is the case, then so will it be for us. Our proclamation of God’s truth and love – our choice to live according to the “style of God” – will always elicit opposition from those whose hearts remain hardened against the message of the Cross. We will, in other words, be “persecuted” for the sake of Jesus. As Jesus says, those who oppose our message will do so “because they do not know the one who sent me.”

And that is the key for us: *always to know that we have a Father in heaven* – the same Father who is the Father of Jesus. The Father who, looking upon us in love through Jesus his Son, has adopted us in love, and who makes all of us brothers and sisters to one another. If we were to look around now, at the different faces representing different families and different nationalities, we would see a living example of this mystery of grace that takes many and makes us one.

Soon we will turn to the celebration of the Liturgy of the Eucharist. This Eucharist is the climactic realization of our call to be one in Christ – of the call for our many families and nations to be one family in the “home” of the Father. Surely this is the greatest reason to rejoice: that we, who are many, are called to share in one Bread and one Cup: the one Body of Christ that makes us one, and that at the same time, and *because* of the unity that it brings about, secures our lives in the Father despite any suffering or opposition we must endure. Secured in God’s life in this way, we are then free to announce the Good News to others, so that they too might come to share with us in the eternal security of being God’s family.