

Mass in Observance of the World Day of the Sick
Cathedral of St. Mary of the Assumption
February 8, 2020

Most Rev. Salvatore J. Cordileone

It is certainly a happy occasion that brings us together today, and I'm happy and thankful to all of you for being here, and especially to our priests who have joined us today. Thank you for being with us. Of course, Father Art Albano, the rector here at St. Mary's Cathedral, Father John Piderit, the Moderator of the Curia at the Chancery office, the ubiquitous Father Larry Goode, pastor of St. Francis of Assisi in East Palo Alto, Father Michael Strange for whom the word 'retired' is a misnomer - although officially in retired status he remains very active - and Father Andrew Ginter, a chaplain at Marin Catholic High School. So thank you all for joining today and concelebrating this Mass.

It occurs at this time of the year in the Church's life, when we've sort of turned the corner, we've kind of passed the whole phase of Christmas season and celebrations reflecting on the mystery of the incarnation, all of which leads up to the Feast of the Presentation of the Lord in the temple we celebrated last Sunday. And now the focus shifts and we begin to anticipate Lent; Lent is soon upon us. Lent, of course, is marked by special spiritual and devotional practices, most particularly one that we cherish so much is praying the Stations of the Cross. I always reflect when it comes to the Stations of the Cross of Saint John Paul II's meditations on the Stations, meditations which he gave in a celebration of the Stations of the Cross he did in the year 2000.

In particular, his meditation on the sixth station, Veronica wiping the face of Jesus and then Jesus's - the impression of his face remains. He spoke about how this is symbolic for every true act of charity. Every true act of charity leaves the impression of the face of Christ. As he put it, "Every act of goodness, of understanding, of service, leaves on people's hearts an indelible imprint and makes us ever more like the one who emptied himself, taking the form of a servant."

It is an act of charity that motivates our Lord to perform his first miracle, or as St. John refers to them, as signs - signs because they're a physical reality that are pointing to something greater. Here, his first sign at the wedding feast of Cana. An act of charity for this poor couple in this embarrassing situation of running out of wine. And as John says, "Jesus did this as the beginning of his signs at Cana in Galilee and so revealed his glory." The 'beginning,' that word 'beginning' is found at, appropriately enough, the beginning of St. John's gospel, when he speaks about in the beginning was the Word and the Word was with God and the Word was God. His prologue to his gospel speaks of the eternal glory that is the Lord's, the second person of the most Holy Trinity. And here he says 'beginning' again, making the link that he's beginning to manifest that glory here in our world, in our world of space and time.

And he does so in the most ordinary circumstances of life; this one, a wedding feast. It's always that way. He reveals his glory in this way, the most ordinary circumstances of life. But we need eyes of faith to see. But he gives us help. He gives us help, an indication also in this story of Cana. John says there was a wedding at Cana in Galilee and the mother of Jesus was there. Mary was there at the beginning when God broke into this world by the incarnation of his son in her

womb, and she is here again at the beginning, when he begins to manifest his glory in his public life, and she will be there all the way to the very end, at the foot of the cross. She accompanies her son all the way, and so she does for us. She accompanies us, to help us, with the gift of faith, to see his glory. But to do so, we must use all of our gifts well. We must use our gifts with faith if we want to get glimpses into this glory.

I'll turn once again to Pope John Paul II in the homily he gave at Mass in Lourdes on the Solemnity of the Assumption, August 15, 2004 where he spoke of this. He said, "Our Lady of Lourdes has a message for everyone." Then addressing the assembly, "The men and women of freedom. But remember, human freedom is a freedom wounded by sin. It is a freedom which itself needs to be set free. Christ is its liberator. He is the one who for freedom has set us free. Freedom is one of the great gifts that God has given to us, but it must be used well, if we are to be truly free. It must be used for sharing God's love with those whom the world would ignore, the world would find of little value and perhaps even discard." As Pope Francis would put it, his well known and very poignant and apt phrase, this 'throwaway culture' that we live in.

To share God's love, using our freedom to share God's love, putting love into action: that is charity, and it is precisely there where the face of Christ is to be found. It is precisely there where we see his glory. The story of Veronica teaches us this. Veronica, Vero E Kona, the true icon. The true icon of Christ, the true representation of his face is Lourdes. Lourdes is the quintessential true icon, not Lourdes simply in the sense of the geographical place, but in the sense of the spiritual place when we bring Lourdes into our everyday life.

Mary is always there to help us as she was there at Cana, to assist that poor couple in the embarrassing situation by pleading with her son. So she is there at Lourdes to reveal the glory of her son to a poor young girl living in the hinterlands, and she continues to do so. She continues to help us, to accompany us, so that through the charity of putting our love into action, which is the charity of her son, he may continue to work spiritual and physical healings.

She is with us to help us see the glory of her son when we make space for Lourdes in the ordinary circumstances of our life. That is what you do as members of the Order of Malta. You bring Lourdes here. It's not just a physical place over in Europe. It exists where we make room for it, putting the love of Christ into action where we can actually see his face, for those whom the world would ignore and discard. Thank you for your love of God's special people. Thank you for helping us to see the face of his son.

I'll conclude with the words that Saint John Paul II concluded that homily in Lourdes over 15 years ago. "Dear friends, in this, we know we can count on Mary, who since she never yielded to sin, is the only creature who is perfectly free. I entrust you to her, walk beside Mary as you journey towards the complete fulfillment of your humanity."