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"Pray for the gift of unity"

Homily of Monsignor Fernando Ocariz, Chancellor of the Pontifical University of the Holy Cross, at the inaugural Mass for the 2021-2022 Academic Year. He highlights the “yearning for unity in the Church” reflected in the texts of the Mass for Pentecost.

10/12/2021

Homily of the Prelate

We have just heard the story of Pentecost. It is the story of a very special encounter which, thanks to the descent of the Holy Spirit, gave humanity the opportunity to come together in the name of the Lord, no longer as strangers, but rather as brothers and sisters.

I am happy to be here today with all of you, after a long absence during which the pandemic, still not overcome, kept us from meeting in person. Today I pray in a special way for our dear professor Miguel Angel Tabet, and for every person in our academic community who has passed away in these recent months.

“Pentecost is the feast of union, understanding and human communion,” Benedict XVI said in 2012. This communion is a gift from God that our world and the entire Christian family so greatly needs. The beginning of a new academic

year is a propitious occasion to unite ourselves once again to our Lord's prayer for unity at his Last Supper: "that they may all be one; even as thou, Father, art in me, and I in thee, that they also may be in us" (*Jn* 17:21).

Last January, Pope Francis, speaking about the unity of the Church, said: "the Lord did not command that his disciples be united. Nor did He give them a discourse to justify its need. No, *he prayed* to the Father for us, so that we might be one. This means that we are unable to achieve unity by our own strength. Unity is above all a gift; it is a grace to be requested through prayer."

In today's Gospel we have heard that Jesus had many more things to say to the Apostles (cf. *Jn* 16:12). Among them is surely the yearning for unity in the Church, and for unity among us. Unity that enables us to discover

the great works of God of which the apostles spoke (cf. *Acts 2:11*). The alternative, as we well know, is to stay anchored to our own little concerns, which instead of drawing us closer to God and those around us, entrap us in our selfishness, and do not allow us to see the beauty of the world, and above all the value of the others.

The Psalm once again speaks of these great works: “Bless the Lord, O my soul! You are so great, Lord, my God. How great are your works, Lord! You have done everything with wisdom; the earth is full of your creatures” (Psalm 103). Among these works the human person holds a special place. Each person is a work of the Lord that is offered to us as a gift. It is up to each of us to discover the gift that each person we meet on our way represents.

In one's years at the University there are many encounters with new people: other students, professors, university staff. Let us ask our Lord to help us always discover the gift that He is offering us through all these encounters. How many beautiful friendships are born during your years in Rome! Lasting friendships that you will all take back to your own countries, and that are often a strong stimulus in your lives of service to God. "When friendship is authentic, when our concern for the other person is sincere and fills our prayer, there are no shared moments that are not apostolic. Everything is friendship and everything is apostolate, without being able to distinguish them" (Pastoral Letter 1 November 2019, no. 19).

In 1969, Saint Josemaría said in a meditation: "To live according to the Holy Spirit means to live by faith and

hope and charity – to allow God to take possession of our lives and to change our hearts, to make us resemble him more and more” (*Christ is Passing By*, 134).

Perhaps we can also make a new resolution to live according to the Holy Spirit, which is nothing other than to live like Jesus. These words of Saint Josemaría speak about a deep change of heart. Some may wonder why this is necessary. Why do we still need a deep change of heart if we already have experienced many years of Christian life or even a vocation to serve God in his Church? The answer to this question is found in the words of Jesus that we have just heard: “I still have many things to say to you.” If we really want to hear God’s voice today, we need to have an open spirit. We need the humble attitude of someone who knows they have received a lot and, at the same time, who are aware how

great God is and that his wisdom far exceeds our knowledge.

At Pentecost, our Lady occupies a discreet place, but she is present with her Son's apostles. Let us ask Mary, at the beginning of this academic year, to enlighten us in the coming months so that we too can be instruments of unity wherever we are, and specifically in the life of this university.

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