

Readings from the Fourth Annual Baltimore Candlelight Vigil of All Saints
October 31, 2015
SS. Philip and James Church, Baltimore, Maryland

First Reading: Excerpts from the Homily Given by Pope Francis at the Canonization Mass of
St. Junípero Serra in Washington, D.C., on September 23, 2015

(Full Text: www.popefrancisvisit.com/schedule/mass-at-basilica-of-the-national-shrine-of-the-immaculate-conception)

The Church, the holy People of God, treads the dust-laden paths of history, so often traversed by conflict, injustice and violence, in order to encounter her children, our brothers and sisters. The holy and faithful People of God are not afraid of losing their way; they are afraid of becoming self-enclosed, frozen into élites, clinging to their own security. They know that self-enclosure, in all the many forms it takes, is the cause of so much apathy.

So let us go out, let us go forth to offer everyone the life of Jesus Christ. The People of God can embrace everyone because we are the disciples of the One who knelt before his own to wash their feet.

We are here today, we can be here today, because many people wanted to respond to that call. They believed that “life grows by being given away, and it weakens in isolation and comfort.” We are heirs to the bold missionary spirit of so many men and women who preferred not to be “shut up within structures which give us a false sense of security...within habits which make us feel safe, while at our door people are starving.” We are indebted to a tradition, a chain of witnesses who have made it possible for the good news of the Gospel to be, in every generation, both “good” and “news.”

Today we remember one of those witnesses who testified to the joy of the Gospel in these lands, Father Junípero Serra. He was the embodiment of “a Church which goes forth,” a Church which sets out to bring everywhere the reconciling tenderness of God. Junípero Serra left his native land and its way of life. He was excited about blazing trails, going forth to meet many people, learning and valuing their particular customs and ways of life. He learned how to bring to birth and nurture God’s life in the faces of everyone he met; he made them his brothers and sisters. Junípero sought to defend the dignity of the native community, to protect it from those who had mistreated and abused it. Mistreatment and wrongs which today still trouble us, especially because of the hurt which they cause in the lives of many people.

Father Serra had a motto which inspired his life and work, not just a saying, but above all a reality which shaped the way he lived: *siempre adelante!* Keep moving forward! For him, this was the way to continue experiencing the joy of the Gospel, to keep his heart from growing numb, from being anesthetized. He kept moving forward, because the Lord was waiting. He kept going, because his brothers and sisters were waiting. He kept going forward to the end of his life. Today, like him, may we be able to say: Forward! Let’s keep moving forward!

Second Reading: Excerpts from a Homily Given by St. Josemaría Escrivá on October 8, 1967

(Full Text: www.escrivaworks.org/book/conversations-chapter-8.htm)

To communicate with the Body and Blood of our Lord is, in a certain sense, like loosening the bonds of earth and time, in order to be already with God in heaven, where Christ Himself will wipe the tears from our eyes and where there will be no more death, nor mourning, nor cries of distress, because the old world will have passed away.

This profound and consoling truth...could, however, be misunderstood...whenever men have tried to present the Christian way of life as something exclusively “spiritual.”

When things are seen in this way, churches become the setting par excellence of the Christian life. And being a Christian means going to church, taking part in sacred ceremonies, being taken up with ecclesiastical matters, in a kind of segregated world...while the ordinary world follows its own separate path. The doctrine of Christianity and the life of grace would, in this case, brush past the turbulent march of human history, without ever really meeting it.

Everyday life is the true setting for your lives as Christians. Your ordinary contact with God takes place where your fellow men, your yearnings, your work and your affections are. There you have your daily encounter with Christ. It is in the midst of the most material things of the earth that we must sanctify ourselves, serving God and all mankind.

I have taught this constantly using words from holy Scripture. The world is not evil, because it has come from God's hands... We ourselves, mankind, make it evil and ugly with our sins and infidelities... You must understand now, more clearly, that God is calling you to serve Him in and from the ordinary, material and secular activities of human life. He waits for us every day, in the laboratory, in the operating theatre, in the army barracks, in the university chair, in the factory, in the workshop, in the fields, in the home and in all the immense panorama of work. Understand this well: there is something holy, something divine, hidden in the most ordinary situations, and it is up to each one of you to discover it.

I often said to the university students and workers who were with me in the '30s that they had to know how to “materialize” their spiritual life. I wanted to keep them from the temptation, so common then and now, of living a kind of double life. On one side, an interior life, a life of relation with God; and on the other, a separate and distinct professional, social and family life, full of small earthly realities.

No! We cannot lead a double life... There is just one life, made of flesh and spirit. And it is this life which has to become, in both soul and body, holy and filled with God. We discover the invisible God in the most visible and material things.

There is no other way. Either we learn to find our Lord in ordinary, everyday life, or else we shall never find Him. That is why I can tell you that our age needs to give back to matter and to the most trivial occurrences and situations their noble and original meaning. It needs to restore them to the service of the Kingdom of God, to spiritualize them, turning them into a means and an occasion for a continuous meeting with Jesus Christ.

I assure you, my sons and daughters, that when a Christian carries out with love the most insignificant everyday action, that action overflows with the transcendence of God... Heaven and earth seem to merge, my sons and daughters, on the horizon. But where they really meet is in your hearts, when you sanctify your everyday lives.

**Third Reading: Excerpts from the Homily Given by Pope St. John Paul II at the Canonization Mass of
St. Maria Faustina Kowalska in St. Peter's Square on April 30, 2000**

(Full Text: https://w2.vatican.va/content/john-paul-ii/en/homilies/2000/documents/hf_jp-ii_hom_20000430_faustina.html)

Today my joy is truly great in presenting the life and witness of Sister Faustina Kowalska to the whole Church as a gift of God for our time. By divine Providence, the life of this humble daughter of Poland was completely linked with the history of the 20th century, the century we have just left behind. In fact, it was between the First and Second World Wars that Christ entrusted his message of mercy to her. Those who remember, who were witnesses and participants in the events of those years and the horrible sufferings they caused for millions of people, know well how necessary was the message of mercy.

Jesus told Sister Faustina: "Humanity will not find peace until it turns trustfully to divine mercy."

Christ has taught us that man not only receives and experiences the mercy of God, but is also called to practice mercy towards others: "Blessed are the merciful, for they shall obtain mercy." He also showed us the many paths of mercy, which not only forgives sins but reaches out to all human needs. Jesus bent over every kind of human poverty, material and spiritual.

His message of mercy continues to reach us through his hands held out to suffering man. This is how Sister Faustina saw him.

Sister Faustina Kowalska wrote in her diary: "I feel tremendous pain when I see the sufferings of my neighbors. All my neighbors' sufferings reverberate in my own heart; I carry their anguish in my heart in such a way that it even physically destroys me. I would like all their sorrows to fall upon me, in order to relieve my neighbor." This is the degree of compassion to which love leads, when it takes the love of God as its measure!

It is this love which must inspire humanity today, if it is to face the crisis of the meaning of life, the challenges of the most diverse needs and, especially, the duty to defend the dignity of every human person. Thus the message of divine mercy is also implicitly a message about the value of every human being. Each person is precious in God's eyes; Christ gave his life for each one; to everyone the Father gives his Spirit and offers intimacy.

This consoling message is addressed above all to those who, afflicted by a particularly harsh trial or crushed by the weight of the sins they committed, have lost all confidence in life and are tempted to give in to despair. To them the gentle face of Christ is offered; those rays from his heart touch them and shine upon them, warm them, show them the way and fill them with hope. How many souls have been consoled by the prayer "Jesus, I trust in you", which Providence intimated through Sister Faustina! This simple act of abandonment to Jesus dispels the thickest clouds and lets a ray of light penetrate every life.

Faustina, a gift of God to our time, a gift from the land of Poland to the whole Church, obtain for us an awareness of the depth of divine mercy; help us to have a living experience of it and to bear witness to it among our brothers and sisters. May your message of light and hope spread throughout the world, spurring sinners to conversion, calming rivalries and hatred and opening individuals and nations to the practice of brotherhood. Today, fixing our gaze with you on the face of the risen Christ, let us make our own your prayer of trusting abandonment and say with firm hope: Christ Jesus, I trust in you!

Fourth Reading: Excerpts from *No Greater Love* by Blessed Teresa of Calcutta

Jesus came into this world for one purpose. He came to give us the good news that God loves us, that God is love, that He loves you, and He loves me. How did Jesus love you and me? By giving His life.

God loves us with a tender love. That is all that Jesus came to teach us: the tender love of God. "I have called you by your name, you are mine."

The whole Gospel is very, very simple. "Do you love me? Obey my commandments." He's turning and twisting just to get around to one thing: love one another.

"Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with thy whole heart, with thy whole soul and with all thy mind." This is the command of our great God, and He cannot command the impossible. Love is a fruit, in season at all times and within the reach of every hand. Anyone may gather it and no limit is set. Everyone can reach this love through meditation, the spirit of prayer, and sacrifice, by an intense interior life. Do not think that love, in order to be genuine, has to be extraordinary.

What we need is to love without getting tired. How does a lamp burn? Through the continuous input of small drops of oil. What are these drops of oil in our lamps? They are the small things of daily life: faithfulness, small words of kindness, a thought for others, our way of being silent, of looking, of speaking, and of acting. Do not look for Jesus away from yourselves. He is not out there. He is in you. Keep your lamp burning, and you will recognize Him.

These words of Jesus, "Even as I have loved you, love one another," should be not only a light to us, but they should be a flame consuming the selfishness that prevents the growth of holiness. Jesus "loves us to the end," to the very limit of love: the cross. This love must come from within, from our union with Christ. Loving must be as normal to us as living and breathing, day after day until our death.

I have experienced many human weaknesses, many human frailties, and I still experience them. But we need to use them. We need to work for Christ with a humble heart, with the humility of Christ. He comes and uses us to be His love and compassion in the world in spite of our weaknesses and frailties.

One day I picked up a man from the gutter. His body was covered with worms. I brought him to our house, and what did this man say? He did not curse. He did not blame anyone. He just said, "I've lived like an animal in the street, but I'm going to die like an angel, loved and cared for!" It took us three hours to clean him. Finally the man looked up at the sister [who was caring for him] and said, "Sister, I'm going home to God."

And then he died. I've never seen such a radiant smile on a human face as the one I saw on that man's face. He went home to God. See what love can do! It is possible that young sister did not think about it at the moment, but she was touching the body of Christ. Jesus said so when He said, "As often as you did it for one of my least brothers, you did it for me." And this is where you and I fit into God's plan.