

Bishop's Homily
BLUE and WHITE MASS
Cathedral of the Blessed Sacrament
September 12, 2009

Is. 50:5-9a James 2:14-18 Mark 8:27-35

Eight years have passed and still we remember, - as we should. Days that can change our lives for the better should never be forgotten. For, if they are, they cease to change our lives.

Yesterday was a day for our Diocesan Church to remember, as we said our farewells to one of our distinguished and dedicated priests, Monsignor George B. Flinn. But, on that day, we also observed the eighth anniversary of the terrorist attack on our nation. It brought back memories of that day of September 11, 2001.

Certainly, it was a horrific day. There were villains. There were victims. Nevertheless, what had the power to change our lives are the heroes of United Flight 93, - as well as those of countless number who risked their own lives to save those in danger of losing theirs. Some made the ultimate sacrifice, themselves. Many others are scarred for the rest of their earthly lives. They are the men and women who show us the fabric of which the real America is made.

And, so it is that, once again today, at this worship of the Supreme God, we gather to give honor and thanks to those who respond to disasters of all sorts in our midst, - those who watch over us and protect us, - including our elected officials. We call it the Blue and White Mass (after the color of uniforms), - a time that we set aside to express deep gratitude to the Almighty for raising up individuals with such generosity, - at the same time giving thanks to the individuals themselves for responding to the call that the Lord has placed in their hearts. I wish to express my deep appreciation to the Knights of Columbus for sponsoring this event and recognize the presence of the Daughters of Isabella.

*[Would all **public safety personnel** please stand so that we can acknowledge you.]*

Because of the 9/11 date, this Mass always falls close to our celebration of the Feast of the Exaltation of the Holy Cross. It is a recognition that the very instrument of death can be an instrument of life, - and, actually was that in the case of the Lord Jesus. The cross has long been associated with suffering, - many referring to their burdens as crosses that they have to carry.

However, an ancient meaning of the phrase “to suffer” is “to allow.” Christ allowed himself to enter into the circumstances that were presented to him by the God Almighty, - whom He and we call Father. It was by doing so willingly and generously that Jesus became victorious over evil and death and brought about good and life not only for himself but for us, as well.

The passages of Sacred Scripture proclaimed for us this evening not only remind us of all this but challenge us to do likewise. At the end of his quizzing the disciples about his identity, Jesus reminds them, “Whoever wishes to come after me must deny himself, take up his cross, and follow me. For whoever wishes to save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for my sake and that of the gospel will save it.”

Jesus’ Apostle James warns that words need to be back up by deeds. Loving our God requires our loving others. Whatever we do for others, we do for him.

It appears to me that those involved in providing our rescue, safety, and health understand these messages. Not only do they understand them, they live them. Jesus told us that we would always have misfortunes and disasters around us. But, because He provides us with all that we need, He also provides for us and our communities those who are willing and able to see us through such difficult times.

And, so it is that we give thanks. But, that can be such a shallow expression. Let us, rather, resolve to give them the respect that they deserve, - not just today but always. And, let us include them in our conversations with the Lord, - that their lives might be safe and their efforts successful, as they put their lives and comfort on the line that we might live and be comfortable. - GOD’S BLESSINGS ON YOU ALL!