



Homily – President’s Inauguration Mass¹

*The Most Rev. José H. Gomez
Archbishop of Los Angeles*

*Loyola Marymount University
March 8, 2011*

President and Mrs. Burcham, distinguished guests, all my dear brothers and sisters in Christ:

I am happy to be here with you today. This past Sunday, I had the privilege of celebrating my first Mass as Archbishop of this great Archdiocese of Los Angeles. Today it’s my privilege to celebrate the close communion of this Catholic university to our local Church and to my apostolic ministry.

The readings you have chosen for this Eucharist express a beautiful vision for servant-leadership in obedience to Christ.

I urge you to pursue this vision with zeal. I urge you to deepen your desire to know the mind of Christ and to do God’s will in all humility.

Jesus Christ must be the heart of Loyola Marymount — as he must be the heart of every Catholic university.

Jesus is the *Logos*, the divine Reason through whom the universe is created. He is the Truth and Wisdom of God.

Christ reveals to us the dignity of the human person created in God’s image. And he reveals that creation and history have an order and purpose in the loving plan of God.

In Jesus we find not only the unity of knowledge, but we also find the fundamental harmony of faith and reason, truth and freedom, justice and mercy, beauty and wisdom.

That means that the Catholic university can always be bold and confident in its research and teaching — so long as it remains inspired by Christ, and faithful to his Gospel as it comes to us in the Church.

My friends, we live in an age when knowledge has become fragmented. Too often in our culture, we only think of education as something we do to get a job or to make money.

In higher education, we see a dangerous and artificial divorce of faith from reason. The very idea of Truth and the Good is questioned by a relentless relativism in our culture. And we are losing our awareness of the transcendent dignity of the human person.

In this age, the Catholic university, rooted in Christ, must be an outpost of hope.

Pope John Paul II said that the Catholic university is “born from the heart of Church.” And its vocation is to be “a living institutional witness to Christ and his message, so vitally important in cultures marked by secularism.”ⁱ

Your vocation as a Catholic university is vital.

The Catholic university bears witness to the great tradition of Christian humanism that shaped the arts and sciences and the values and institutions of Western civilization. This is the tradition that gave us Augustine, Aquinas, and Dante; Mozart and Vivaldi; Michelangelo and Gaudi; Lavoisier and Copernicus.

So it is a noble calling to lead a Catholic university.

As leaders you are always followers of Christ. And as followers of Christ, we are all called to serve God and our brothers and sisters in humility and love.

We hear that today in the first reading from the prophet Micah.

The ancient rabbis used to say that Moses gave the Jewish people 613 commandments and that Micah summarized them all in these three principles that we hear today — to do justice, to love goodness, and to walk humbly with our God.ⁱⁱ

The Scriptures tell us over and over that humility is the beginning of wisdom and holiness, as pride is the root of folly and sin.

And Jesus tells us that humble service must characterize all leadership in the Church. The Christian who would lead, must serve.ⁱⁱⁱ

For the world, power and authority are rooted in the capacity for coercion, in the ability to “lord it over” others. But it cannot be that way with us, Jesus said.

For us, power and authority are rooted in humble obedience — in conforming our will to God’s will.

We hear that in today’s second reading. St. Paul tells us that we must have the same mind as Christ — who humbled himself to obey the Father’s will and for that was exalted in heaven.

Christ makes this same promise throughout the Gospels. If we humble ourselves, God will exalt us — while the proud will be scattered in the imagination of their hearts.^{iv}

Let us pray today, my friends, that all of us seek to learn from Jesus who is meek and humble of heart.^v Let us make this prayer especially for President Burcham and his staff and faculty here at Loyola Marymount.

Jesus gives us a beautiful example to follow in the Gospel today when he washes his disciples' feet.

However, my brothers and sisters, we must be careful not to reduce this Gospel to only an ethical lesson.

All of the readings today command us to be humble and to serve one another. But we don't do these things only because we are commanded. We don't imitate Jesus only because he told us to.

Our Christian faith is not simply a set of commands or rules for living. We believe in a divine Person. Our faith brings us to the encounter with the love of the living God.

This relationship of love with Jesus Christ, this love alone, must be our motive in all things.

To walk humbly with our Lord requires ongoing, daily conversion in Christ. To have the mind of Christ means to want only what our Father wants. It is to be obedient to his will, without regard to the pressures and fashions of the culture around us.

If we truly want to wash the feet of others — if we truly desire to serve — we must make our words and actions a “part” of the saving mission of Christ. We must humble ourselves so that he can use us — as instruments of his love.

Jesus said that if we believe in him we will be able to do the works that he does — and even greater works than these. But he also warned that apart from him we can do nothing.^{vi}

So let us seek in everything to unite ourselves more closely to Jesus Christ.

At this hopeful time of transition I urge you to rediscover the inspiration of Loyola's Jesuit foundations.

St. Ignatius of Loyola was a great model of servant leadership. Make his motto your own. *Ad Maiorem Dei Gloriam*. Do everything for the greater glory of God.

Examine yourselves always as St. Ignatius did, in light of the cross: “What have I done for Christ? What am I doing for Christ? What ought I to do for Christ?”^{vii}

As we continue this celebration of the Eucharist, I ask that the prayers of St. Ignatius be upon this Catholic university. I ask too the prayers of Our Lady of Guadalupe, Seat of Wisdom.

May this community of scholars and learners always be united in seeking the truth in Jesus Christ and his Church, our true Teacher.

ⁱ *Ex Corde Ecclesia*, 1, 49.

ⁱⁱ Babylonian Talmud, *Makkoth* 23b–24a.

ⁱⁱⁱ Matt. 20:25; Mark 10:42.

^{iv} Matt. 23:13; Luke 14:11; 18:14; 1:51.

^v Matt. 11:29.

^{vi} John 14:12; 15:5.

^{vii} *Spiritual Exercises*, 53.