



*Homily – Southern California Renewal Communities
Catholic Renewal Conventionⁱ*

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

*Anaheim Convention Center
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My dear brothers and sisters in Christ:

In our Gospel for this sacred liturgy, we have just heard the beautiful promise of our Lord Jesus Christ: “*For where two or three are gathered in my name, there am I in the midst of them.*”

What an amazing gift he offers to us! The gift of his divine presence! The gift of himself — if only we gather together and call on him in earnest prayer.

So this afternoon we have gathered in his name — in the Holy Name of Jesus. The only Name under heaven by which we can be saved! The Name at which every knee must bow, in heaven and on earth and below the earth.ⁱⁱ

We have gathered in his Holy Name and our Lord Jesus Christ, the Son of the living God, is among us, alive in our midst. With power, in the Holy Spirit poured out upon us from on High.

So we praise him! We give him thanks today for the great gift of his love!

We give thanks also today in a special way, for his grace in allowing this beautiful apostolate of the Southern California Renewal Communities to flourish for these past 40 years.

Yours is a beautiful ministry, my friends! To help us to grow in our friendship with the Holy Spirit — the Sanctifier, the One who is going to make us holy!

One of the great saints of the 20th century, St. Josemaría Escrivá, said the Holy Spirit is “the great Unknown.”

“For some, unfortunately,” he said, “the Paraclete is the Great Stranger, the Great Unknown. He is a merely a name that is mentioned, but not *Someone*, not one of the three persons in the one God, with whom we can talk and with whose life we can live.”ⁱⁱⁱ

So we need this renewal that you bring us — in our Church and in each one of our lives. We all need a deeper awareness of the Holy Spirit who has been poured into our hearts in Baptism, bearing witness that we are children of God!^{iv}

We all need to learn more about what it means to live by the Spirit and to walk in the Spirit.^v And the readings we have just heard in this Holy Mass talk to us about that.

To live by the Spirit, is to live by the new law of love that Jesus Christ has given us.

We have the duty to love, St. Paul tells us in today's second reading. To love our neighbors as ourselves. This is the whole fulfillment of the Law of God.

Love opens our eyes to see that there is no one who is not our brother or sister. There is no one who does not have God as his Father. That means that no one can be a stranger to any of us. There is no one who is not worthy of our time, our attention, or our care.

In the first reading today, we hear that God made Ezekiel a “watchman over the house of Israel.”

That is a good way for us to think about our Christian duty to love. God gives us the responsibility to care for one another.^{vi} He calls us to be “watchmen” over others.

Ezekiel is an interesting prophet.

He was a priest and he was one of the thousands of Israelites carried off into bondage when the Babylonians captured Jerusalem and destroyed the Temple.

God called Ezekiel to teach and bear witness so that the people would keep the true faith while they were in exile, living far from the Holy Land in this strange society of Babylon.

Now, my brothers and sisters, as Christians today in this culture, don't we find ourselves in a situation a little bit like Ezekiel?

Sometimes we can feel like strangers in a strange land. We can see that our society are changing, turning away from God and the values of faith and family.

In this culture, we are called to be “watchmen,” my brothers and sisters. We have to listen for the Word of God and we have to proclaim it with our lives, just as Ezekiel did.

To love our neighbors as ourselves means that we have to be vitally concerned about our neighbors' salvation.

We have to tell everyone the good news of Jesus Christ — that God is our Father who loves us! That in his tender mercy, he has a plan of love for each one of our lives and for our world!

One of our newest blessed in the Church is Blessed Irmã Dulce.

They used to call her “Sister Sweet,” because she had such sweet love for the poor. She lived in Salvador de Bahia, in northeastern Brazil. She was a saint of our time, she died just a few years ago, in 1992.

There is even a Los Angeles connection with her. She visited here in 1962 and our city still has a “sister city” relationship with Salvador de Bahia.

Blessed Irmã Dulce started a labor union for Catholic workers, something we can remember tomorrow on Labor Day. She also established hospitals, schools, shelters, even a farm — for the very poor.

One day Blessed Irmã Dulce found a boy, about 10 years old, sitting against a wall in a dirty alley.

She asked him, “What is your name?” And he replied, “*Thing*.” She asked what that mean, and he explained, “That is what I’m called.”

She found out that this boy didn’t know his mother or father and he didn’t know what name he had been given when he was born.

The boy asked her, “Do you want to be my mother?”

So eh took him in. She told him about God our Father. And she gave him a name, Antonio, after her favorite saint, St. Anthony of Padua.

Blessed Irmã Dulce used to say that the love she had in her heart was too little for such a great God. But, she said, “I think that the child Jesus is pleased with all little acts of love — no matter how small they are.”^{vii}

I think that is true, my brothers and sisters. Our love does not have to be “big.” We can fulfill our duty to love in little things. Nothing is too small to offer to God!

We all have many little opportunities every day to show the people we meet that God loves them, just Blessed Irmã Dulce did.

St. Paul said that the fruit of the Spirit is love!^{viii}

So let us ask the Spirit to inflame our hearts with his love! Let us ask him today for the grace to be better “watchmen” — in our personal relationships and in our witness to the faith in our society and culture.

Let's ask Mary, our Blessed Mother, in whom the Holy Spirit conceived the child Jesus, to help us to always love like Jesus loved — by offering every little thing we do for the love of God and our brothers and sisters.

ⁱ Readings (23rd Sunday in Ordinary Time): Ezek. 33:7–9; Ps. 95:1–2, 6–9; Rom. 13:8–10; Matt. 18:15–20.

ⁱⁱ Phil. 2:9–10; Acts 4:12.

ⁱⁱⁱ *Christ is Passing By*, 134; compare John 14:16, 26; 15:26; 16:7.

^{iv} Rom. 5:5; 8:16.

^v Gal. 5:25.

^{vi} 1 Cor. 12:25–26.

^{vii} Haverstock, *Give Us This Day: The Story of Sister Dulce the Angel of Bahia* (Appleton-Century, 1965), 122; “Nobel nominee to be beatified Sunday,” *Zenit* (May 19, 2011).

^{viii} Gal. 5:22–23.