

INSTALLATION HOMILY
Most Reverend Alexander K. Sample
Archbishop of Portland in Oregon

Praised be Jesus Christ, risen from the dead, who lives and reigns forever.
Amen!

It is in the true spirit of Easter joy that I greet all of you here as the newly installed shepherd of God's flock in western Oregon.

I wish to express my gratitude to His Eminence, Cardinal Levada, a former Archbishop of Portland and Prefect Emeritus of the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith, for gracing us with his presence today.

I am most appreciative for the presence of His Excellency, Archbishop Viganò, Apostolic Nuncio to the United States, who has presented the papal bull appointing me Archbishop of this local Church and who has formally installed me as its chief shepherd. Your Excellency, your presence with us today brings a special closeness of our Holy Father, Pope Francis, and reminds us all that we are part of the universal Church of Jesus Christ.

I want to thank and acknowledge a very special person to all of us, Archbishop Vlazny. I want to thank you, Your Excellency, for the very kind and gracious welcome you extended to me to this Archdiocese from the moment of our first telephone conversation after my appointment here. But most of all, on behalf of the entire Church of the Archdiocese, I want to thank you for your faithful and beautiful ministry as its shepherd for all of these past 15 years.

My brother bishops, priests and deacons, dear consecrated religious, my dear brothers and sisters in Christ, and all people of good will, to you I repeat the words of the psalm: "This is the day that the Lord has made, let us rejoice and be glad in it!"

I say this not because of the installation of a new Archbishop, but because Jesus Christ has risen from the dead. He is alive, he loves us, he calls us to faithful discipleship, and he asks us to be witnesses of his resurrection before the world.

You see, there is the danger on such an occasion to think that this is somehow all about your new Archbishop or this local Church. We must always keep our eyes fixed on Jesus. It is not about me. It is always about him, and we must never lose sight of that.

In these readings from the Acts of the Apostles which the Church gives us during these first days of the Easter octave we have St. Peter, in the power of the Holy Spirit on the day of Pentecost, standing before the people and proclaiming Jesus Christ, as risen from the dead.

His is truly a bold and fearless proclamation of the Good News meant for all those whom God calls. He is fulfilling the mission that Jesus Christ entrusted to him and the other Apostles.

This is what is needed in the Church today. We need a new Pentecost, a new outpouring of the Holy Spirit to set our hearts on fire for proclaiming Jesus Christ. With hearts filled with joy, love and mercy, we must proclaim the Good News.

I come to you as your new Archbishop to announce afresh to you, the disciples of Jesus Christ, that he is alive! This is good news, not just for the disciples of 2000 years ago, but for us today. It is good news for all people. Jesus is alive and has become for us the source of eternal life. By his death he has destroyed death, freed us from the corruption of sin and opened up for us the way to the Kingdom of Heaven. This is the basic message of salvation and we must never cease to believe it and proclaim it.

I would like to draw your attention to my episcopal motto: *Vultum Christi contemplari*, "to contemplate the face of Christ." You must know that, for me, this is more than just a nice phrase. It speaks clearly and directly of my vision for our work together here in western Oregon.

The inspiration for this motto is taken from the writings of Blessed John Paul II, specifically from his apostolic letter at the beginning of the new millennium, *Novo Millennio Ineunte* and his last encyclical, *Ecclesia de Eucharistia*.

In *Novo Millennio Ineunte*, he writes: "'We wish to see Jesus'" (quoting the Gospel of St. John). This request, addressed to the Apostle Philip by some Greeks who had made a pilgrimage to Jerusalem for the Passover, echoes spiritually in our ears too during this Jubilee Year. Like those pilgrims of two thousand years ago, the men and women of our own day — often perhaps unconsciously — ask believers not only to 'speak' of Christ, but in a certain sense to 'show' him to them. And is it not the Church's task to reflect the light of Christ in every historical period, to make his face shine also before the generations of the new millennium? Our witness, however, would be hopelessly inadequate if we ourselves had not first *contemplated his face*."

Nemo dat quod non habet! No one can give what one does not have! We cannot give Jesus Christ to others until we have first come to know him intimately and profoundly.

In the Gospel today we see Mary Magdalene as the first one to announce the risen Lord. Jesus tells her to go and tell the other disciples this good news, that he is alive. And so she does.

But notice that she did not recognize him at first, and that it is only after she has gazed at him, recognized him, that she is able to proclaim him to the others as risen from the dead. He called her name and she responded.

But why did she not recognize him at first. This is a question long pondered by scripture scholars and those who have reflected on the Gospel. Perhaps she was distracted by her own grief and worry. Maybe she was anxious and pre-occupied.

In any case she failed to gaze at him, to really look at him. Is this the case for us today? Are we so distracted, anxious, fearful and pre-occupied with the business of daily living that we too have failed to look intently at Jesus, to recognize him, to contemplate his face?

Before we can proclaim him to others, we too must first recognize him. We must really see him. We must contemplate his risen face before we can announce him to others.

We must hear the Lord Jesus call our name, as he called Mary, and as she recognized him, so must we. But then we must proclaim him!

This Year of Faith, in which this installation of your new Archbishop takes place, is meant to help us do just that. This year is meant to strengthen our faith by contemplating Christ's face and the mystery of our faith in order to prepare us for the supremely important work of the New Evangelization, the great mission that is before us. To really set about the work of the New Evangelization in earnest, however, our faith must first be strengthened.

In his letter to the Church proclaiming this Year of Faith, Pope Benedict XVI quoted some powerful words of the great St. Augustine: "Believers strengthen themselves by believing." This is a time for strengthening our own faith, so that we can better witness to the love, the mercy and the truth found in the Lord Jesus Christ. But we strengthen that faith by believing more firmly and devoutly that which has been revealed to us by Almighty God in the Sacred Scriptures and in the living Tradition of the Church.

This will require holiness. We need saints for our own day to be the salt of the earth, the light of the world, and a leaven in society. We are above all called to holiness, and our times demand that we answer that call with renewed zeal and vigor.

There are many challenges facing us in these times. We are witnessing an almost unprecedented and increasing radical secularism that seeks to push God out of the picture, and not just to the margins of society, but even right off the page of human experience in society today.

We are also facing what Pope Benedict XVI, and now Pope Francis, have called a dictatorship or tyranny of relativism. There is no longer in our society a recognition that there are some eternal and unchangeable truths, especially about the very nature and dignity of the human person. This is a serious challenge when we can no longer dialogue with our contemporaries from a common understanding of the innate and essential nature of the human person.

And then there are the challenges of our own making. We cannot hide from the fact that the scandals that have plagued the Church in recent years have seriously damaged our standing and credibility in the wider society in which we seek to proclaim the Gospel of Life. This great Archdiocese has certainly not been spared this tragedy.

When I refer to these "challenges of our own making," I mean that some of your leaders, your pastors, your shepherds have seriously let you down and done grave harm to individuals. We can never express too much sorrow and regret for the harm that has been done and we must never relax our efforts and our pledge to help heal victim survivors of sexual abuse and to protect children and young people.

So it is with humility but with a firm purpose that we go about our renewed efforts to proclaim the Good News. But we must be strong in our own faith, convinced of the light and truth of the Gospel of Jesus Christ.

As those called to be witnesses to Jesus Christ in the world, we must move beyond the days of doubting and questioning our Catholic Faith, wringing our hands in the face of so many difficulties and challenges. In the face of so many challenges today, how will we ever convince the world of Jesus Christ if we ourselves are not convinced?

We must witness and speak of our faith before others with confidence and clarity and with the greatest charity. But speak of Jesus Christ and our faith, we must. And we must not forget that which will our greatest witness to Jesus Christ, and that is the love, the mercy and the compassion that we show toward those who suffer; the poor, the marginalized, the abandoned, the lonely and forgotten. The modern day "widows and orphans" that Sacred Scripture admonishes us to care for. How beautifully our new Holy Father, Pope Francis, is showing us the way by example.

In the midst of our challenges we must continue to bear witness to the dignity of human life and every human person from the womb until natural death, the dignity of marriage and the good of children, a special love for the poor and marginalized, and religious liberty.

I am so very happy that so many of our ecumenical and interreligious brothers and sisters have joined us today in this celebration. I will truly value and respect our friendships and relationships and will work hand in hand with our brothers and sisters in promoting the true common good and the dignity of every human person.

And so, my dear brothers and sisters, it is time, in the words of Blessed John Paul II to “duc in altum” – to put out into the deep sea of history and to let down the nets for a catch, leading others to the love of God in Jesus Christ.

“Duc in altum! (Put out into the deep!) These words ring out for us today, and they invite us to remember the past with gratitude, to live the present with enthusiasm and to look forward to the future with confidence: ‘Jesus Christ is the same yesterday and today and forever’”

Duc in altum! – no matter how difficult or even hopeless the challenges may seem, Jesus Christ has risen from the dead. He is alive and is with us and will make it happen. What he needs is our faith and trust. We repeat the words that Jesus taught to St. Faustina: Jesus, I trust in you!

Now we turn towards the Holy Eucharist, the source and summit of the Christian life. We must not merely celebrate so wonderful a mystery. We must be transformed by and imitate the mystery we celebrate. We must lay down our lives for God and in service to others, in imitation of Jesus who came not to be served but to serve and to give his life as a ransom for the many.

This is my Body, which is given up for you. This is my Blood which is poured out for you. As he has done for us, so we must do for one another. Such a heroic virtue and self-giving is what is needed in our times.

I have been deeply inspired by the holiness, the zeal and missionary fervor of the first bishop of my former diocese, Venerable Frederic Baraga, whose own heroic virtue has been recognized for the whole universal Church by Pope Benedict XVI. He came to the upper Great Lakes region as a missionary and a stranger from another land. I feel a strong bond with him as I come to you also as a stranger from another place. I ask his prayers for me as I take up my new pastoral responsibility among you. They say, “Home is where the heart is.” I know my home will be here, because you will have my heart.

Blessed John Paul wrote in *Ecclesia de Eucharistia*: “To contemplate the face of Christ, and to contemplate it with Mary, is the “programme” which I have set before the Church at the dawn of the third millennium, summoning her to put out into the deep on the sea of history with the enthusiasm of the new evangelization.

It is to my Mother and your Mother, Mary Immaculate, the patroness of this great Archdiocese that I entrust my ministry as your shepherd. May she form in me the likeness of her Son, Jesus, who is the Good Shepherd.

God bless you, and please pray for me!