

Homily —Installation of Msgr. Kevin Kostelnik as Pastorⁱ

*Most Reverend José H. Gomez
Archbishop of Los Angeles*

*St. Joseph Church
Long Beach, California
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My dear brothers and sisters in Christ,

It is great to be here!

I am honored to help you welcome Msgr. Kostelnik as your new pastor. As you know, we lived in the same house at the Cathedral of Our Lady of the Angels for five years — so I got to know him pretty good! I'm sure that you already like him and are happy that he is at St. Joseph's. He is a good man and a good priest. A man of prayer and compassion and wisdom.

So on this special day, we also want to invoke the presence and prayers of your patron saint, St. Joseph. We need his prayers and his example of strength and courage.

This has been a hard week in our country, as we all know. Let us continue to pray today for the people in Virginia, in Charlottesville. And let us commit ourselves in a new way — to overcoming racism and every ideology that denies the equality and dignity of the human person.

Let's us pray also for the people in Barcelona, Spain. For the victims and their families and for peace in the world and in our country.

The message that we hear this week in our readings from Sacred Scripture is very appropriate to help us in the times that we are living.

Today's readings remind us that God wants his Church to be the home for all peoples — to be one family that welcomes men and women of every nation, every race, every language and every culture.

We heard those beautiful words from the prophet Isaiah in the first reading: "*For my house shall be called a house of prayer for all peoples.*"

The prophet tells us that God wants every man and woman to love the holy name of the Lord! God wants every one of us to worship him on his holy mountain.

This is God's vision! In God's eyes — there are no "foreigners," there are no strangers. He made this world to be his Kingdom! He made every people to belong to his family.

Every church should be a “house of prayer for all peoples.” Every church is meant to be a family — where all are welcome and every one we meet is a brother or a sister.

This is the truth we hear also in our Gospel today.

The Gospel teaches us and the saints show us — that beyond the color of our skin or the countries where we come from, we are all brothers and sisters. We are all children of one Father. And we all have the Mother of God as our mother.

The woman we meet in our Gospel today is a Canaanite. She is from a country outside of Israel. She is a foreigner, an immigrant.

And what Jesus is teaching today — is that “faith” is the key to belonging to God. It does not matter where you are born, or what color skin you have, or the language that you speak. Faith is what matters.

The Church is “catholic.” That means the Church is universal, worldwide and all-inclusive. God our Father wants to make the whole world one family in Jesus.

And he wants his Church to be a “sacrament.” And the Church is you and me. We are called to be a visible “sign” of the unity that God wants for the human family. And each of us must work to be an “instrument” of God — building his family through our words and actions and attitudes; in our homes, in our jobs, in our parishes and in society.

In the second reading today, St. Paul says God desires “*the reconciliation of the world.*” So, the Church is called in this moment to be a true sign and instrument of healing and unity.

This is the Church’s mission. And that means you and me. This is our mission, my brothers and sisters.

We are seeing in our country a new kind of racism and nationalism. It is a racism and nationalism rooted in fear. There is fear about what is happening in our society. There is fear about what is happening in our economy. Our country has become so angry and bitter, so divided — in so many different areas.

There is no place in the Church — and there is no place in American society — for racism; for prejudice against people based on their race or nationality.

We need to work to overcome all the forms of racial thinking and racist practices that are still realities in our society. And, as we know, there is still a lot of racism and nativism tied up in the immigration debate. Even among Catholics. This is all wrong and it needs to stop!

Our task is to bring people together, to build bridges and open doors and make friendships among all the diverse racial and ethnic groups and nationalities in our country.

Jesus does not limit God's salvation to only the "*house of Israel*." He shows us in the Gospel today — that the doors of God's Kingdom are open wide to all peoples.

This was a radical teaching in Jesus' time. And it is a radical teaching in our time. But it is true. We are all brothers and sisters. We are all children, born of the Father's mercy. St. Paul tells us today that Jesus came — "*that [God] might have mercy upon all*."

God is with us. Always. In our sufferings as well as in our joys. Believe this — and you will know true peace! All things are working for the good of those who love God. Even if we do not understand at the moment. Even if we cannot see God's hand working in the events of our life or the world.

So, do not get discouraged when things seem dark, or when it seems like there is no way out of a situation.

When things are hard, we need to pray even harder. The Canaanite woman — she was desperate but she never doubted in God's love, or in God's goodness. She kept talking to Jesus, kept praying. She said, "*Lord, help me!*"

Let us ask God to give us the faith of this Canaanite woman as we face our challenges and the challenges in our country.

Let us ask for the grace to believe — that God's love can transform every heart that is hardened by hatred.

As you welcome Msgr. Kostelnik to your great parish, I ask that St. Joseph will intercede and help him to be a good father to all of you and help make this parish a sign and instrument of the beautiful plan of God.

And let us ask Mary Our Blessed Mother to intercede for us — that we might have the strength to keep building the family of God and keep building a society where every person is treated as a child of God.

ⁱ Readings (20th Sunday in Ordinary Time): Isa. 56:1, 6–7; Ps. 67:2–3, 5–6, 8; Rom. 11:13–15, 29–32; Matt. 15:21–28.