

The Paulus Institute

for the Propagation of Sacred Liturgy

“CREDO IN SANCTAM ECCLESIAM CATHOLICAM”

(“I believe in the holy Catholic Church”)

+ Athanasius Schneider, Auxiliary Bishop of the Archdiocese of Saint Mary in Astana, Kazakhstan

SERMON

Sunday, February 15, 2015, Missa Cantata

St. Mary Mother of God Church, Washington D.C.

Dear brothers and sisters! In this Holy Mass we would like to express in a particular manner our Catholic faith, renew our faithfulness to the immutable Catholic faith and renew our joy that we can believe in a Catholic manner. The most sublime expression of the immutable Catholic faith is the liturgy, as it had been handed over to us from the holy Apostles in an organic manner. The fact should touch us that we can celebrate the Holy Mass in the same manner as it has been celebrated in a period of more than a millennium and as it has been celebrated in the days of our grandfathers and fathers.

“*Credo in sanctam ecclesiam catholicam*” (“I believe in the holy Catholic Church”). When we profess our faith in the Catholic Church, we profess the truth that Christ has created the Church and that she is one and unique and that this church is the Catholic Church. Christ has established the Church not only upon the fundament which He Himself is, but also upon a visible rock, which is the Apostle Peter and every one of his successors. From the ancient times one could hear these words: “*ubi Petrus, ibi Ecclesia*” (“where is Peter, there is the Church”), the words of Saint Ambrose. Who is with Peter and with his successor is without doubt in the only one Church of Christ. All the persecutors of the Church and all the schismatics of all times tried therefore to separate the faithful from the rock of Peter, which is the Roman chair (*cathedra Romana*).

That which gave to the martyrs and confessors the strength to suffer and especially the peace of heart in midst of inhuman conditions of the prisons and concentration camps, was the most holy Eucharist. When we read the witnesses of their life, we discover for us today the example of their most profound faith in the mystery of the Holy Eucharist, we discover for us their ardent love and their delicate reverence for this greatest mystery of our faith, for they knew: the Eucharist is the Lord: “*Dominus est*”. And with these two words all is said.

Beloved brothers and sisters, in all times of the persecution of the Church, the holy Eucharist was the center and the true goal of the life of the Catholics. Even in the miserable conditions of the catacombs, our persecuted brothers and sisters demonstrated the highest attention and reverence towards the Eucharist. Not even one detail of the rite of the Mass and of the exterior gestures was considered secondary. What an example for us, who are living in liberty, still in liberty, having so many possibilities to celebrate the Holy Mass with solemnity and with all the richness of the worship worthy of the Divine majesty! We want to join with them in the manner of celebrating and venerating the Eucharist.

What an example would it be, when in the midst of the liturgical crisis of the Latin Church in our days in all Holy Masses around the world Catholics would receive Holy Communion kneeling and on the tongue; when during the

Mass there would be ever more signs of adoration, of silence, of sacredness of music; when the priest and the faithful in their souls and in their bodies as well would be turned towards the Lord, looking together in the same direction at the Crucifix or at the face of Christ in the tabernacle in the center of the church. In this way the faith will grow and will become ever more Catholic, ever more Eucharistic.

When we hear the words of the priest “*Introibo ad altare Dei*” or “In the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit”, when we follow interiorly and exteriorly the whole rite of the Mass, we will have the experience that the liturgy is the adoration of Christ Himself, that the Holy Mass is nothing other than the supreme adoration of the Triune God, the Most Holy Trinity. The liturgy of the Holy Mass is the face of Christ Himself, to Whom all should turn their faces. In every true Catholic there should be reflected the adoring prayer of Christ. The true renewal of the Church in our days will happen only when the faithful, and firstly the clergy, will sincerely strive for holiness, which is the perfection of love. There is however no holiness and no

love for the neighbor without the reverent adoration of God, that means without a reverent and Christocentric liturgy. There will be no holiness and no true love for the neighbor unless the Church in our days will kneel down with love and awe before Christ, really and substantially present in the Eucharistic mystery.

The whole life of the faith and the whole liturgy shall be pervaded with reverence towards the majesty of God, acknowledging that all things come from Him, they shall be also pervaded with joy in worshiping God (“*Ad Deum qui laetificat iuventutem meam*”) and be pervaded with trust in His mercy (“*Misericordias Domini in aeternum cantabo*”). The holiness and the heavenly beauty of the liturgy of Mass proclaim this truth and may confirm us in it: “*Credo in ecclesiam catholicam, apostolicam et romanam*” (“I believe in the Catholic, apostolic and Roman Church”). Amen.