



**Homily of His Eminence, Leonardo Cardinal Sandri, Prefect of the Congregation for Eastern Churches, during the celebration of the Pontifical Divine Liturgy in the Cathedral of the Ruthenian Eparchy of Parma on the occasion of the Golden Jubilee of its Creation, Saturday 22 June 2019 A.D.**

Your Grace, Archbishop William, Metropolitan of Pittsburgh,  
Your Graces, Archbishops Fulop and Borys,  
Your Excellency, Bishop Milan Lach,  
Most Reverend Mons. Walter Erbi, Representative of the Apostolic Nunciature in the US,  
Your Excellencies,  
Reverend Fathers, Religious Brothers and Sisters,  
Distinguished Authorities,

Sisters and Brothers in the Lord! Happy birthday! You all look younger than 50 years! It's the birthday, the anniversary of your Eparchy, together with her mother.. the Metropolitan Archeparchy of Pittsburgh, where we will be tomorrow: we thank the Lord for this journey throughout 50 years, and we remember in this Divine Liturgy all the people who were and are now part of the life of this "big family", especially the Bishops, the Priests, the Religious Women, and our grandparents and parents, who offered their lives and they witnesses to the Lord Jesus Christ! May He bless all of them and grant to those who are departed the eternal rest. The best homily was.. our gathering last evening: the witnesses of the faith of your priests, the oldest and the youngest, families, sisters and seminarians: Jesus is still alive in your hearths, and among your community. Thanks to Him, and Thanks to you!

1. My visit to the United States has taken me to Chicago and Detroit, and today and tomorrow, I have the joy of sharing this time together with you the Ruthenian community here and in Pittsburgh. It is a pilgrimage, that through faces and the stories of people like you, makes me touch Ukraine, Eastern Europe, Lebanon, Egypt, Iraq, India... By stopping, even if only for brief periods with communities of the Ukrainian, Ruthenian, Maronite, Coptic, Chaldean and Syro-Malabar faithful in these cities, I have shared a part of the journey of the sons and daughters of the Eastern Catholic Churches in this great country. The United States owes its history and identity to the acceptance of different peoples, some fleeing from wars, some in search of work, and some seeking simply to survive with dignity together with their children and their families. They found the promise of a future in the belief that we can live together in different ways, as authentic and faithful citizens without losing one's roots and identity, as one people while coming from many peoples. We pray that this belief and its promise are not lost.
2. What I have just outlined cannot only be the result of an ambitious human project or a far-sighted policy, because in the heart of fallen man at every time in history lurks the fear that the other, the different, can take something away from me, can be a competitor and an opponent rather than a brother and an ally. Even God can be exposed to becoming the object of such fear, as the temptation of our first parents in the book of Genesis shows us. We are tempted to hide from God, moving away from the source of life, and we can be tempted to do so also with others. But the time after Pentecost that we are experiencing, in particular with the great Sunday that we have just celebrated, the one that in the Byzantine calendar commemorates all the saints, reminds us that communion is and remains above all a gift to ask. If our prayer, as St. Paul says, is above all inspired by the Spirit, it cannot be authentic when we ask for blessings on our personal or community identity at the expense of others, or worse, against others, though different from us. This creeping risk, unfortunately widespread in many large countries of the so-called civilized world which are perhaps a little forgetful today of their past, must be kept in mind.
3. In contrast to this fear, we are certain that we are in communion with all the saints of heaven, which is the same in the East as in the West. We like to think of them as so many stars that

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shine in the firmament and that light up with joy for their Lord, who calls each of them by name: the holy apostles, Saint John the Baptist, the Forerunner, your patron, the Fathers of the Church, the martyrs, the virgins, the evangelizers, the people who sanctified themselves in the daily service of charity to others or as fathers and mothers of a family. They arouse in us great desires, a word that in its Latin origin (*de-sidere*: “from the stars”) recalls precisely something that we discover in our heart but that actually comes to us from the sky. In the Incarnation, but above all in the Paschal Mystery of the Lord Jesus, we know that heaven has opened itself. In Him, we can contemplate the new heavens and the new earth: He descended, so that we may ascend to the Father. The communion of saints thus prevents us from turning up our noses or living with our heads in the clouds, but asks us to live a new fraternity starting from our Baptism and from the gift of the Spirit, making the earth ever more an abode of the light of God sown in our hearts. In this Jubilee, it is beautiful to think of the signs of light and hope that the Eparchy of Parma has been able to sow in these fifty years of life.

4. Let us therefore live this tension of unity, this love for justice and for peace, in a Christian way. In a special way for you sons and daughters of the Ruthenian Church, this means to remain in a great embrace with the Holy Father, Pope Francis, guarantor of the visible unity of all believers in Christ; with Metropolitan William; with Bishop Milan, whom I have known in Rome since before his ordination a few years ago; with all the brothers and sisters in the lands of Central and Eastern Europe from which you came, especially those unfortunately suffering after the many trials of recent history. I invite you in particular to give thanks for the gift of freedom that you have been able to experience in this country because, for many years, atheist and inhuman regimes oppressed different parts of Europe, while you have had the opportunity to develop and grow without that kind of obstacle. This freedom, as St. Paul says, must not become a pretext to lose your roots.
5. Communion is a reality that comes from God and a task that we can live only by remaining in Christ, but as the Gospel always reminds us, we cannot forget the Mother of God, who from the Cross the Lord also entrusted to each of us, to take her into our home. In recent years, I have had the opportunity to be a pilgrim for various celebrations in Mukachevo in Ukraine, at the Shrine of Mariapocs in Hungary and at L’utina in Slovakia. In all these contexts, I prayed with thousands of faithful. In our hearts and minds, we too journey there with the steps of faith, to implore the Mother of God to help us live as children of God and remain builders of peace. Amen.