

Homily – Lumen Gentium Awards

January 31, 2019

This evening we honor members of our parishes from throughout the Archdiocese who have been nominated by their pastors for their exemplary work on behalf of their communities of faith. These sisters and brothers have brought the light of Christ to others. Each of them has been – in that sense – a *lumen gentium*, a reflection of Jesus' light to the nations. I congratulate and thank all of them for their witness of Christian discipleship.

Our reading from the Letter to the Hebrews reminds us that Jesus, our high priest, was fully human as well as divine. So, he understands our weakness, our temptations, our suffering. He came into the world to proclaim the good news of God's mercy, compassion, and healing love for everyone – without exception!

The Light of Christ is very much needed in the thick darkness of our world today. There is also darkness within the Church. The issue of clerical sexual abuse has brought sadness, confusion, anger, and discouragement to us. We have been living in this darkness for thirty years or more, and it has continued to deepen. However, we are working hard to bring light and transparency as we

try to bring healing and reconciliation to all those who have been affected by these sinful acts and illegal deeds.

It is very clear that we all have to work together as the Body of Christ to make the Church safe for all of us, especially our children. We need to acknowledge that we are the People of God, but a sinful people, in constant need of conversion, reform, renewal. As Pope Francis has underscored several times in the past year, we need to get rid of the clericalism that shelters priests and bishops from being accountable to the whole Church.

Like the risen Lord, the Good Shepherd, we need to reach out a healing hand to those who have been victims of sexual abuse, to affirm their God-given dignity, to respect their rights, to make them welcome in our congregations. As a forgiving Church, we also need to find a way to bring reconciliation to the abusers without shielding them from civil sanctions.

Those who receive awards this evening are a wonderful gift and inspiration to all of us about faithful missionary discipleship. Our Lady is with us always, showing us the way to follow her beloved on. Dear Lady, help us to bring the Light of Christ to the world!