

Cardinal Wuerl Celebrates Mass at Annunciation to Install New Pastor, Offers Remarks About Recent Events Involving the Church

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WASHINGTON, D.C. – Cardinal Donald Wuerl, archbishop of Washington, celebrated Mass today at the Church of the Annunciation in Washington to install Monsignor Michael Mellone as the parish’s new pastor. As the Mass was concluding Cardinal Wuerl addressed the faithful gathered for the Mass to offer some words addressing the recent events involving the Church. While disclosing that the parish Mass was not the appropriate place to recount them in detail, the Cardinal said he wished to provide some thoughts on the path forward.

“The pathway out of this darkness into Christ’s light involves what we just spoke about in the installation of your pastor, a renewed commitment on the part of each priest to do what in fact the vast majority of priests do so well every day. You and I must continue to support them as they carry out their ministry that is such a significant part of the healing,” he said.

Also underlying the responsibility of bishops in the task of healing the Cardinal asserted, “A sign of our trust in the healing power of God’s Spirit has to be a new commitment beginning with the bishops. Any successful purification of our Church is going to require an engagement of the bishops working with our lay people. For that reason, we need, all of us together, to be open to the grace of God in order to dedicate the time and energy that is required for any prayerful and spiritual renewal.”

The heart of that renewal, the Cardinal continued, is what we do in the Confiteor at Mass, he said, referring to the penitential prayer recited at Masses where all acknowledge their sinfulness and seek God’s mercy and forgiveness. There has been a terrible evil present in the Church, said the Cardinal. “Confession calls with it the need for apology, contrition and atonement. It is never too late to begin this essential action of prayer. As we move forward, I hope to lead by action, not just by words.

Expressing again his apologies for the terrible actions that have hurt so many and referencing his [August 30 letter to priests](#) of the archdiocese, the Cardinal continued, “I ask you for prayers for me, for forgiveness for my errors in judgment, for my inadequacies, as well as for the grace to find, with you, ways of healing, ways of offering fruitful guidance in this darkness. Our prayers, yours and mine, are also for the whole Church – the Body of Christ – wounded by the shame of these egregious actions. You too bear a deep wound because you love the Church and do not know what is coming next. I wish I could wipe away all of this pain, confusion and disillusionment, but this is simply not possible. But we can do whatever it takes to help move this Church closer to the pathway that leads us from this darkness.”

“On an institutional level, we need to look, once again, at how accountable the exercise of responsibility in the Church is, the accountability to the whole Church to all of the members of the Church, and also how transparent is the working out of this accountability. My brothers and sisters, while this is not the moment to try to articulate the mechanisms for wider lay engagement, more realized accountability and evident transparency, it is a time to say that this is part of where we need to go as we move forward. For all of us, today is a time to begin to look forward with the pledge that we must manifest new ways of achieving that purification and holiness that Jesus holds up for us in today’s Gospel.”

We do all of this first in prayer, mindful that the source of our contrition, of our healing, and of our pathway into the future is the victory Christ won for us on the cross. We

need every day to make our own, all over again, the prayer, "We adore you, O Christ, and we praise you because by your holy cross you have redeemed the world."

Finally, we need to hold close in our prayers and loyalty our Holy Father, Pope Francis. Increasingly, it is clear that he is the object of concentrated attack. At each Mass we pray for him by name. As we do so with our voices may we do so as well with our hearts."

One individual in the congregation expressed anger and several left during the Cardinal's remarks, however, the Cardinal was also met with applause and expressions of support from the parishioners as he concluded his remarks. This sentiment was echoed as he greeted the faithful who approached him and expressed their prayers and support after Mass.