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Card. Burke speaks about 'mystery of suffering' at KC gatherings

Zoe Ryan | Jul. 25, 2011

KANSAS CITY, MO ? Cardinal Raymond Burke concelebrated Mass at the Cathedral of the Immaculate Conception in Kansas City, Mo., July 24 after a Saturday conference, "Being Faithful, Even Unto Death: Catholic Wisdom on the Treatment of the Disabled and Dying."

His homily at the Sunday Mass reflected the core message of the conference: to embrace suffering and see its meaning through the love of Christ. Archbishop Joseph Naumann of Kansas City and Bishop Robert Finn of Kansas City-Saint Joseph were co-celebrants.

Burke began by highlighting that it is by the sacraments that the relationship between the faithful and Christ's "enduring love" is shown.

"The greatest blessing of our lives is not some material good or worldly success but the revelation of the mysteries of the kingdom which God the Father has made to us," Burke said. He encouraged the faithful to recognize the "great gift" of God's "ceaseless love."

Burke frequently referenced "the greatest treasure" -- the sacrifice that Jesus made -- and how the faithful should live their lives in accordance with that love and acceptance of suffering.

"According to his plan, he has predestined us to share in glory which is his, Father, Son and Holy Spirit, for all eternity."

"How can we fail to consider every aspect of our daily living within the context of the mystery ? of God's pure and selfless love? how [can] we spend our lives in pursuit of various treasures while neglecting to pursue the one treasure which really matters, the one treasure which endures through eternity?" he asked.

He noted how easily people in a secularized culture make daily decisions "as if we were our own creators and saviors." In doing so, he said, we fail to recognize God's gift of love.

He spoke of St. Gianna Molla, an Italian mother who chose to go through a risky operation to save the child she was carrying, and in doing so died a few days after the birth. St. Gianna's youngest child, Gianna Emanuela Molla, is now a physician and was present at the conference. She spoke at the Mass about her mother's life.

Jesus' suffering and dying is the "greatest treasure in the church," Burke said, and "those who are sick and suffering are to be treasured by all in the church."

For those who suffer, Burke said, "Let us consider how we can assist them, to accept their suffering and dying that is shared in the suffering and dying of Christ, filled with pure and selfless love, with the sure hope of eternal love and the kingdom of heaven. In a special way, let us draw our understanding of the mystery of suffering and dying from the Eucharistic sacrifice in which we now participate."

"In a secularized society, we view sickness and suffering as completely negative and meaningless," he said. "The holy Eucharist reveals the mystery of [God] in the acceptance of suffering for the salvation of others."

He ended with the message "Be the love of Christ."

Burke is cardinal prefect of the Supreme Tribunal of the Apostolic Signatura, sometimes called the Vatican's Supreme Court.

The Mass preceded a reception at the Kansas City-St. Joseph Catholic Center where several relics of St. Gianna were on display. The conference was sponsored by St. Gianna Physician's Guild.

[Zoe Ryan is an *NCR* intern. Her e-mail address is zryan@ncronline.org.]

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