

## 2<sup>nd</sup> Sunday of Easter 2025 “Remembering Pope Francis” Bilingual

Bishop Frank Schuster

Peace be with you! It is a joy to celebrate the sacrament of confirmation with you on Divine Mercy Sunday. It has been a long journey and God has been with you every step of the way. Believe it. However, today is not the finish line. Today is a starting line. Today marks the beginning of your spiritual journey through life as a fully initiated Catholic, with all the joys and challenges that come with this. I hope my words today will strengthen you as you begin this new chapter as a disciple of Jesus Christ.

Mis amigos, es una alegría celebrar con ustedes el sacramento de la confirmación. Han recorrido un largo camino y Dios ha estado con ustedes en cada paso. Créelo. Sin embargo, hoy no es la línea de llegada. Hoy es la línea de largada. Espero que mis palabras de hoy te fortalezcan al comenzar este nuevo capítulo como discípulo de Jesucristo.

As we reflect on the life and ministry of Pope Francis in these days following his passing my most favorite insights from Pope Francis come from his apostolic exhortation *Evangelii Gaudium*, The Joy of the Gospel. In it, Pope Francis offers a stark warning about the world we live in that we should listen to. He also offers us a remedy for it. First the warning. Pope Francis warns us, “The great danger in today’s world, pervaded as it is by consumerism, is the desolation and anguish born of a complacent yet covetous heart, the feverish pursuit of frivolous pleasures, and a blunted conscience.” Why does Pope Francis warn us about this? He continues, “Whenever our interior life becomes caught up in its own interests and concerns, there is no longer room for others, no place for the poor. God’s voice is no longer heard, the quiet joy of his love is no longer felt, and the desire to do good fades.” I believe that everything Pope Francis is warning us about the world here is true. Just because we are confirmed doesn’t mean we won’t face temptations. The world is filled with them.

Al reflexionar sobre la vida y el ministerio del Papa Francisco en estos días posteriores a su fallecimiento, mis ideas favoritas del Papa Francisco provienen de su exhortación apostólica *Evangelii Gaudium*, La alegría del Evangelio. En él, el Papa Francisco ofrece una dura advertencia sobre el mundo en el que vivimos que debemos escuchar y luego nos ofrece un remedio para ello. Primero la advertencia. El Papa Francisco nos advierte: "El gran riesgo del mundo actual, con su múltiple y abrumadora oferta de consumo, es una tristeza individualista que brota del corazón cómodo y avaro, de la búsqueda enfermiza de placeres superficiales, de la conciencia aislada". Creo que todo lo que el Papa Francisco nos está advirtiéndole sobre el mundo aquí es cierto. Y entonces, ¿cuál es el remedio? El Papa Francisco dijo esto: "Invito a todos los cristianos, en todas partes, en este mismo momento, a un renovado encuentro personal con Jesucristo... Les pido a todos ustedes que hagan esto indefectiblemente todos los días. Que nadie piense que esta invitación no es para él, ya que ‘nadie está excluido de la alegría que nos trae el Señor’".

My friends, we heard a moment ago Pope Francis’ warning about the world we live in. What is his remedy? Pope Francis offers this, “I invite all Christians, everywhere, at this very moment, to a renewed personal encounter with Jesus Christ...I ask all of you to do this

unfailingly each day. No one should think that this invitation is not meant for him or her, since ‘no one is excluded from the joy brought by the Lord’”. In our Gospel reading, St. Thomas has a renewed personal encounter with Jesus Christ that changes his life forever. That experience led Thomas to fall on his knees and cry out “My Lord and My God.” You see, the Divine Mercy of Jesus does that. It is appropriate that Pope Francis is laid to rest on this weekend that we celebrate the Divine Mercy of Jesus. The theme of mercy for those who live on the margins and on the periphery was at the heart of Pope Francis’ pontificate.

My dear confirmandi, follow Pope Francis’ advice, and keep your heart open to Jesus every day. Make it easy, not difficult. Consider Jesus as your co-pilot who is with you every single moment, the good moments, the bad moments, the joyful moments, and even in our moments of shame. I would argue that it is especially in the moments when we fail that God can help us most. Indeed, the sacrament of confirmation you are receiving today should remind you every day that with all the worries life can throw at you, God is with you. Even with everything the world expects of you, so often unrealistically weighing down on you, God understands you. Even when you fail, even when you fail, God will always offer to forgive you. Why? Because God loves you. God loves you, and he loves you more than you love yourself. Believe it! The world will never love you like God does. The secret is to just let him into your heart.

Amigos míos, sigan el consejo del Papa Francisco y abran su corazón a Jesús todos los días. Hazlo fácil, no difícil. El sacramento de la confirmación que estás recibiendo hoy debería recordarte todos los días que, a pesar de todas las preocupaciones que la vida pueda traerte, Dios está contigo. Incluso con todo lo que el mundo espera de ti, que a menudo te agobia de manera poco realista, Dios te entiende. Incluso cuando fallas, cuando caes, Dios siempre se ofrecerá a perdonarte. ¿Por qué? Porque Dios te ama. Dios te ama, y te ama más de lo que tú te amas a ti mismo. ¡Créelo! El mundo nunca te amará como Dios lo hace. El secreto es dejarlo entrar en tu corazón.

Yes, this is why today marks a starting line, not a finish line. Being sealed with the gift of the Holy Spirit is like having God’s signature written on your heart in permanent ink. That is what real love looks like. It is permanent and once we let God’s love fill our hearts in that way, every day, we will not be able to sit still. Like the Apostles, we become missionary disciples in a world so hungry for God’s love, especially to the poor and marginalized. That is how Pope Francis lived his life. The invitation now is for us to do the same. And so, on behalf of everyone here, thank you for your “yes”. May the good work that God has begun in you be brought to completion through Christ our Lord. Amen.