Address on Holiness *by Archbishop Gabriel Ganaka*
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Always remember that God has an open agenda for each and every one of us, namely that we be holy. Long, long ago you can see for yourselves in the Book of Leviticus, Chapter 19 verse 2. "The Lord told his people. Be ye holy because I the Lord Your God am holy." Hundreds of years later, the Lord, Jesus Christ, preaching His famous Sermon on the Mount said "Be ye perfect just as your Heavenly Father is perfect." Matthew, Chapter 5 verse 48. And he also said, "Seek ye first the kingdom of God and His righteousness. All other things shall be added to you as well." But unfortunately, many people are seeking all those other things except the kingdom of God and His righteousness. So they are not happy. They are not contented. They have little peace of mind.

Why we should reflect a bit on our call to holiness today is that the rosary is one of the weapons that can help in our growth in holiness. Third point - in the letter to the Romans, Paul the Apostle says we are called by God to conform to the image of His Son, Jesus Christ. Romans, Chapter 8 verse 29. And in First Thessalonians, Chapter 4 verse 3 he says to us, "What God wants is for you to be holy." And also in the Epistle to the Hebrews, that we should try and be at peace with all men and women and to be holy because without holiness, no one will see the

Lord - no one will see the Lord.

At this juncture, we ask what is holiness? Holiness is not sleeping in the church every night abandoning your family because you want to get to Heaven and you must be on your knees 24 hours. God does not approve of your abandoning your role as a mother, a wife and being fanatical about the question of holiness. You can be holy exercising the duties of a normal housewife, sanctifying those duties, those daily chores that you are confronted with and handling them patiently; not grumbling and cursing the children and saying all kinds of unjust things all over the place. But the short definition of holiness is Christ-likeness - to be like Christ, to be like Jesus.

May I digress a bit and recall what one Senator said in Congress during the trial of Clinton. He asked, "Is there any pastor in this audience? Where is the chaplain?" They said he wasn't there that day. He said, "All right." He said, "I have a question to put before you. One pastor asked his congregation one day, 'How many of you have seen anybody who resembles Jesus?' Everybody started looking at the other person. 'If you have seen someone who resembles Jesus, put up your hand.' Nobody did. Then finally, one obscure figure from the back of the church put up his hand. So they asked him to come over to the microphone and he said, 'I have seen one. And that person is the ex-husband of my present wife - the ex-husband of my present wife - because this woman was giving him

hell - that that person who would live with her must have been Jesus.' " I had a good laugh last night listening to this man. You know when someone sees somebody who is extraordinary in patience or in some good qualities, they think this person must be Jesus. Like one little boy, he had a basket of oranges and he was selling them at the railway station. And during the rush hour as people were jostling to get to work in time, somebody knocked down his basket and all his oranges were all over the place and people were just trampling past. Somebody decided to miss his train and help this boy pick up the oranges one by one. And when they finished the boy said, "Excuse me sir, are you Jesus?" He was so moved that this man had time for him and his carton of oranges. So somebody deeply convinced inside sometimes let the world see a bit of those qualities without ever realizing it. That is why Jesus said, "You shall receive power when the Holy Spirit comes upon you and you will be My witnesses. Not only here in Jerusalem but in Judaea, and to the utmost ends of the earth."

We are supposed to be ambassadors, to be his representatives, let our light shine before the whole world so that they may see our good works and glorify Our Father who is in Heaven. Holiness also means doing God's will in all circumstances and in all situations. Holiness means saying goodbye to sin, deliberate sin forever, one moment at a time, one decision at a time, one decision at a time. Because you cannot sit here and say up to the year 3000, I will never sin against God. You cannot say that. You do

not know what tomorrow may bring. But we will try one moment at a time, one decision at a time, one step at a time.

Another side of the coin is that holiness is a gift from God. Paul said in his letter to the Thessalonians "May God sanctify you in body, mind and spirit. He who has called you will do it because He is faithful." He is faithful. He will do it. Yet Paul warns us that holiness involves discipline. And when you look at the Greek word for discipline it means you act like the athletes at the Olympic games who must train and drill themselves daily, painfully, until their whole bodies are under the control of their minds, and they are able to jump great heights and so on and so forth.

One athlete during one of the Olympic games was able to jump 19' 6" in pole vaulting. He just did it with fantastic ease. So a photographer dashed up and said, "What is the secret - what was the secret of your success?" He said, "I practiced for 10,000 hours." Each time he practiced; he mapped the number of hours - 10,000 hours. How many hours have you invested in prayer for your trip to Heaven to pass St. Peter's final examination? First Timothy, Chapter 4 verse 7 "You must discipline yourself to holiness." You must train yourself to holiness. Training. It involves rigorous training, and yet holiness is a partnership between God and ourselves, the partnership between the farmer and God. The farmer must clear the whole area, remove bad roots and so on that they do not need in that place, plant the seeds to eventually harvest, fold his hands and wait for

God to provide the rain and sunshine and growth. So if you want to be holy, you must pray. You must read the word of God. You must do all that is required of you. Avoid sin. Gradually you will grow in holiness. We know we cannot say, "Now I am holy, let me relax." You cannot say that because the moment you do that you fall into Satan's trap. You are already growing in pride and he will make you fall woefully so that you will you know where you stand.

So being holy is like a plane with two wings, dependence on God and playing our own part so we will fly and zoom. That is why one spiritual writer wrote this. "God does the work of God. Man does the work of man. God will not do the work of man. Man cannot do the work of God." God does the work of God. Man does the work of man. Man cannot do the work of God. God will not do the work of man because He created you with free will so He will not tell you to pull out the rosary and say it. He will not tell you to open your Bible and read it. So God will not do the work of man. So things that you should do, do them. God will do the rest.

What are the aids to holiness? It is this question that has provoked us to share this reflection with you. So first, prayer. Prayer. You must pray fervently day in and day out, and ask God to make you holy. St. James it was that said, "You have not because you ask not." You have not because you ask not. If you ask, you shall receive. Seek and you shall find. Knock and it will be opened to you.

ASK – ‘a’ for ask; ‘s’ for seek; ‘k’ for knock. ‘A’ for ask, ‘s’ for seek and ‘k’ for knock. So ask, seek and knock.

Secondly, use all the sacraments available, especially the Sacrament of Reconciliation where we are purified, and the Eucharist which feeds us and strengthens us against the forces of evil. We receive Jesus himself, the Author of all sanctity.

Then, daily Scripture reading so the Word of God will transform your outlook. The other day we talked about Club 10. I forgot to ask the audience - how many of you have now joined Club 10? Oh, we have some members here. Clap for them. That is very encouraging. Try and join Club 10. You will never regret it. And persevere. You will see the benefits. The benefits are just too good to be true.

Now avoid sin. Sin is the greatest enemy of sanctity. Sin in any shape or form - even the so-called white lies because sometimes when children are growing for example, there comes a time when they are asking about 15 questions a second. They won’t wait for the answer. They are asking and asking. They suddenly become aware that the can talk, so they are asking questions about everything and sometimes if you are not patient, you get irritated. You feel like telling them to shut up but you cannot stifle them so you allow them to ask and ask and then sometimes you tell a lie so they will keep quiet. That is a sin before God. You won’t go to Heaven because you told that lie.

You have to go and burn in Purgatory for some time. It is true. If you read some books, all books on Purgatory, you are frightened. I am sure some of you have seen the TAN books on Purgatory - published by TAN on Purgatory.

So avoid sin and its occasions. But one thing to remember about sin is this - and it is interesting to remember - somebody said between a stimulus and our response, there is a space. And in that space depends our eternal salvation. You are stimulated to want to do something evil - it is up to you to say yes or no. If you say yes, you are finished. But if you say no, you are victorious by the Grace of God. So always remember there is that period - short period - where as if your answer is awaited. Are you going to say yes or no? In all situations there is a space. It is up to you to say yes or no. If you want holiness, you will say no to that bad stimulus that you had.

Besides reading of the Bible, there must be spiritual reading. Reading of the lives of the saints and see what they endured in order to reach what they reached and they are great men and women.

Then there are other spiritual duties we should undertake. Occasional fasting, almsgiving, doing things quietly without blowing our trumpet so that our reward will be great in Heaven,so that our Father who sees in secret, will reward us in secret. But if you give something here and you are busy blowing your own trumpet, you have already

received your reward. Some say, "Why shouldn't I blow my trumpet after all I am the one who knows its tune. I am the one who knows its tune. I will blow my trumpet and not wait for anyone to blow it for me."

Now what is the role of the Holy Spirit in this pursuit of holiness? He is the third person of the Blessed Trinity and He is the only one who has the name Holy as His first name - Holy Spirit - and He is the one who helps us become holy. We are told in Galatians, 5 verse 22 what the Spirit brings is different - love, joy, peace, patience, goodness, kindness, gentleness, trustfulness and self-control. So when you have all these qualities, you are radiating the qualities of Our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ.

But the pursuit of holiness is not easy. You are going to meet with crosses and tribulations. And in the letter to the Hebrews in Chapter 12 I think the author tells us when we were much younger our parents disciplined us. And if they did not discipline us, we would be bastards. Your Heavenly Father must discipline you too. So when He is disciplining you, you know that it is out of love in order that He may polish you, not punish you. Polish - make you shine and be brilliant in His sight. So when these problems come, Lord polish me gently please because sometimes some of His crosses are so heavy. And you see them crying - some people crying. They cannot understand. Like Mother Teresa was saying, she saw somebody was complaining and crying of the pain and so on, so she told him, "This is a kiss from

Jesus." He said, "Please Mother, tell him to stop kissing me. Tell him to stop kissing me."

And when you are growing in holiness you will suddenly see that some bad things that used to fascinate you before no longer fascinate you. You will see that and say, "Am I not the same person?" They do not fascinate you anymore. They are like rubbish in your sight. Then you know that you are growing in holiness. And those difficult things you could not face, like saying one rosary or one Chaplet or five decades without sleeping half-way through, you now say it with ease and you say the second and the third with ease - not once a week but daily. It is amazing. And some people are complaining that saying fifteen decades is very difficult. I know one woman in my diocese, she has vowed. (I told her not to make it a vow, but she said no, she has to make it.) She has vowed to say 20 rosaries every day – 20! And 20 Chaplets every day! All for the sanctification of the clergy - that God will make the priests holy. One day I went to her house very early in the morning because her husband was traveling to a town somewhere and I wanted him to carry some messages. There she was on her knees. She was on the seventh Chaplet that morning when I, her Archbishop, who did not say one that morning, was hurrying to meet up with mail and come back and say prayers later.

Now when you are generous with God, you will see His fantastic generosity toward you. Generosity with your time.

Time is not your own. Your talents are not your own. Your treasurers are not your own. These are on loan from God. So give Him the glory by using your time, your talents to honor Him. And if you give, he will give to you. Because Jesus told us in Luke, give and it shall be given to you, good measure, full measure, flowing all over that can be poured into your laps. Giving God our time, our treasure and our talents. And talking about our treasure, in the Book of the Prophet Malachy, he said, "Some of you are cheating me. You may ask, how are you cheating me. You are cheating me in the question of tithes and offerings. Bring the full tithes into my storehouse … See if I will not open the windows of Heaven and pour out such blessings that you will not even be able to cope with them."

So the ball is in our court. God is calling us to holiness. Our time is limited here below. Let us use it to glorify God. Let us be serious with our spiritual exercises one day at a time, one choice at a time, and we shall really grow in holiness. And we will see the results. Praise the Lord! Alleluia!