

**HOMILY FOR THE MASS OF RECEPTION AND INSTALLATION
OF THE MOST REV. THOMAS JOHN PAPROCKI AS THE
NINTH BISHOP OF SPRINGFIELD IN ILLINOIS**

**Cathedral of the Immaculate Conception
Feast of St. Thomas More and John Fisher
June 22, 2010**

Your Eminences, Cardinal George and Cardinal Keeler; my brother Bishops, priests, deacons, men and women religious, civic officials, brothers and sisters in Christ, it is good to be with you.

I have been a regular visitor to Springfield since my childhood. Those visits introduced me to our state capital and to the world of Abraham Lincoln. Now, I am no longer a visitor, and I am happy to call Springfield my new home.

This day was chosen for my Mass of Reception and Installation as the Ninth Bishop of Springfield in Illinois mainly for three reasons. One is that this day was available on the calendar of our Metropolitan Archbishop, His Eminence Francis Cardinal George. This is a very important reason and I am immensely grateful not only that he officially installed me just a few minutes ago in the *cathedra*, the chair which is the symbol of the Bishop's office, but also because one could say that he has been leading and mentoring me to this chair for the past thirteen years. It has been my privilege to serve him as Chancellor, as pastor of a parish, and as his

auxiliary bishop for the past seven years. In so many ways he has truly been a mentor for me, teaching me how to be a bishop, providing an example of how to be a good shepherd caring for the flock of our Lord's faithful people.

Secondly, even though my appointment was announced two months ago, I needed some time to finish up my Confirmation schedule and other responsibilities, not the least of which was staying in Chicago until my beloved Blackhawks had won the Stanley Cup!

Thirdly, on the liturgical calendar of the Catholic Church, today is the Feast of the English Martyrs, Saints Thomas More and Bishop John Fisher. Both of these men gave their lives in witness to the faith during the persecution of King Henry VIII. Almost alone among the hierarchy in England at that time, Bishop John Fisher demonstrated heroic courage in standing up to Henry's rejection of papal authority. And so, St. John Fisher provides an excellent example for me and my fellow bishops of being steadfast in vindicating, defending and promoting the rights of the Church to carry out her mission as entrusted to her by Jesus Christ.

St. Thomas More has also been a special patron saint for me. We have both shared the name Thomas, both have been trained and worked as lawyers, and both have held the office of Chancellor. Because St. Thomas More is the patron saint of politicians and lawyers, he is also the patron saint of many civic officials and others who work here in our state capital. So, in this liturgy today, we pray through the intercession of St. Thomas More and ask for his prayers for the Holy Spirit to guide our government officials to work for the common good and to help me to extend a shepherd's care as they fulfill their responsibilities.

In the award-winning movie about St. Thomas More, "A Man for All Seasons," the screenplay by Robert Bolt has the following dialogue between More and his daughter Margaret. This scene takes place in the Tower of London, where More has been imprisoned for refusing to swear to the Act of Succession and take the Oath of Supremacy that would establish the King as the Head of the Church in England.

MORE You want me to swear to the Act of Succession?

MARGARET "God more regards the thoughts of the heart than the words of the mouth". Or so you've always told me.

MORE Yes.

MARGARET Then say the words of the oath and in your heart think otherwise.

MORE What is an oath then but words we say to God?

MARGARET That's very neat.

MORE Do you mean it isn't true?

MARGARET No, it's true.

MORE Then it's a poor argument to call it "neat," Meg. When a man takes an oath, Meg, he's holding his own self in his hands. Like water. (*He cups his hands*). And if he opens his fingers *then* – he needn't hope to find himself again. Some men aren't capable of this, but I'd loathe to think your father is one of them.

MARGARET In any State that was half good, you would be raised up high, not here, for what you've done already. It's not your fault the State's three-quarters bad. Then if you elect to suffer for it, you elect yourself a hero.

MORE That's very neat. But look now ... If we lived in a State where virtue was profitable, common sense would make us good, and greed would make us saintly. And we'd live like animals or angels in the happy land that *needs* no heroes. But since in fact we

see that avarice, anger, envy, pride, sloth, lust and stupidity commonly profit far beyond humility, chastity, fortitude, justice and thought, and have to choose, to be human at all... why then perhaps we *must* stand fast a little – even at the risk of being heroes.

MARGARET (*Emotionally*) But in reason! Haven't you done as much as God can reasonably *want*?

MORE Well ... Finally... it isn't a matter of reason, it's a matter of love.

So ends their dialogue.

Indeed, in the end, it's not a matter of reason, it's a matter of love. When I was named a bishop by Pope John Paul II seven years ago, I chose an Episcopal motto that reflects this truth: *Lex Cordis Caritas*, Latin for, "The Law of the Heart is Love." Yes, I am a student and a practitioner of the law, but a wise lawyer like St. Thomas More helped me to recognize that the law of the heart is love. Sacred Scripture teaches this clearly. In chapter 31 of the Book of Jeremiah, the prophet tells us that God has written His law on our hearts. In chapter 13 of the Letter to the Romans, St. Paul says that love is the fulfillment of the law. To depict this visually,

my coat of arms has two scales of justice to reflect my background in civil law and canon law, but above them both is the Sacred Heart of Jesus. On the cross, from His heart, He poured out for us His unconditional love and divine mercy. The Preface for the Feast of the Sacred Heart of Jesus, which we celebrated earlier this month, says: “Lifted high on the cross, Christ gave his life for us, so much did He love us. From His wounded side flowed blood and water, the fountain of sacramental life in the Church. To His open heart the Savior invites all men, to draw water in joy from the springs of salvation.”

So, I see my primary task as bishop is to love you, more precisely, to radiate Christ’s love with the help of God’s grace throughout the twenty-eight counties of central Illinois that comprise the State of Illinois. I come to our state capital not as a sort of Catholic lobbyist, but as a shepherd of souls. But for me to radiate Christ’s love also means to proclaim His truth, since if we seek to love as He did, then we must do our best to act as He did and do everything we can to make sure that our deeds conform to His divine will to love. Pope Benedict XVI made this connection

between love and truth the focus of his encyclical letter, *Caritas in Veritate* (“Charity in Truth”).

Another one of my favorite movies is *Chariots of Fire*, which tells the story of Eric Liddell. He was known as the “Flying Scotsman” and he was the projected winner of the men’s 100 meters race at the 1924 Summer Olympics. But when Eric Liddell discovered that the trial runs were scheduled for a Sunday morning, he bowed out of the race. Even the Prince of Wales could not persuade him to honor his country by running on the Sabbath. Liddell explained his decision, saying, “God my King is greater than the kings of England, Wales and Scotland. To honor God is more important than to honor the king of England.”

Eric Liddell served as a missionary in China because he was driven to share the joy of honoring God. Because he was a missionary as well as a talented athlete, Eric Liddell had a keen awareness of God’s primary importance in our lives. He observed that “God makes kings, and the rules by which they govern. And those rules say that the Sabbath is His. And I for one intend to keep it that way.”

In the movie, *Chariots of Fire*, Eric Liddell speaks the most memorable line. It is also an inspiring line, so I have it taped next to my bathroom mirror to inspire me when I look at it. Eric Liddell tells his sister, “I believe that God made me for a purpose, but he also made me fast. When I run, I feel God's pleasure.”

We feel that same pleasure when we fulfill the purpose for which God made us. I believe with all my heart that it is God’s will for me to be here. Serving as the Bishop of Springfield in Illinois, I feel God’s pleasure.

The second major task that I see for a Catholic bishop is to be the center of unity for the Christian community. Here, I take inspiration from Springfield’s most famous citizen, Abraham Lincoln. In his famous “House Divided” speech given on the floor of the Illinois Hall of Representatives just down the street from here in the Old State Capitol on June 16, 1858, Mr. Lincoln quoted the Bible [Mark 3:25, Matt. 12:25, Luke 11:17] in reminding people that a “house divided against itself cannot stand.” Years later, as sixteenth President of these United States, President Lincoln would make the preservation of the Union his primary focus and his lasting achievement for this great nation.

So also a bishop must make every effort to be a sign of unity among all Christians and solidarity among all the peoples of this world.

I look forward to visiting the towns and parishes of central Illinois and meeting the wonderful people of this diocese. On occasions such as administering the Sacrament of Confirmation, it has become customary for me to sing a song in my homily. So it is only fitting for my inaugural homily in Springfield for me to conclude this homily with a song.

This song is by Brian Littrell, who achieved success as the lead singer for the Back Street Boys. Brian Littrell got his start in vocal music as a boy singing in his church choir. He now writes and performs Christian music, and he has written this song called, “Jesus Loves You.” This sums up my whole message as a bishop.

All my life I've heard Him say

(Choir: Jesus loves you!)

I dropped down on my knees to pray

(Choir: Jesus loves you!)

I asked Him to come into me

(Choir: Jesus loves you!)

From Him He gives eternity

(Choir: Jesus loves you)

Yes He does

(Choir: Jesus loves you)

Say yes He does

(Choir: Jesus loves you)

Yes He does ...

For the Bible tells us so

You need to look inside yourself

(Choir: Jesus loves you!)

You can't take with you all your wealth

(Choir: Jesus loves you!)

He will give to you an inner strength

(Choir: Jesus loves you!)

He walked on water but you will sink

(Choir: Jesus loves you)

Yes He does

(Choir: Jesus loves you)

Say yes He does

(Choir: Jesus loves you)

Yes He does ...

For the Bible tells us so

Said He's the One that died for me

(Choir: Jesus loves you!)

And that's the reason I believe

(Choir: Jesus loves you!)

And He has done the same for you

(*Choir: Jesus loves you!*)

So watch and see what He can do

(*Choir: Jesus loves you*)

Yes He does

(*Choir: Jesus loves you*)

Say yes He does

(*Choir: Jesus loves you*)

Yes He does ...

For the Bible tells us ... so