

**MASS FOR THE EQUESTRIAN ORDER OF THE HOLY SEPULCHRE OF
JERUSALEM, NORTH CENTRAL LIEUTENANCY OF THE UNITED STATES, AT
THE CATHEDRAL OF THE IMMACULATE CONCEPTION
SPRINGFIELD, ILLINOIS
August 4, 2010**

**† Most Rev. Thomas John Paprocki
Bishop of Springfield in Illinois**

My dear brothers and sisters in Christ: I am pleased to celebrate this Mass with you, my fellow members of the Springfield Section of the Equestrian Order of the Holy Sepulchre of Jerusalem. I have been a member of the order for the past twenty-three years. As I looked at the membership list for the Diocese of Springfield in Illinois, I noticed that the only name listed who was admitted prior to me was Father Don Meeling. Now that he has gone to his eternal reward, that makes me the most senior member of the Springfield Section! You may be thinking that I don't look that old and perhaps I was admitted at the baptismal ceremony shortly after my birth. Of course that is not the case, but it has been a blessing for me to have attended several annual meetings of the Order and to have made two pilgrimages to the Holy Land. On these occasions, I have been very impressed with the people that I've met and have gotten to know. That is why I am sure I will appreciate getting to know you here in Springfield as well.

I am pleased to spend this evening with you celebrating this Eucharist, joining you for dinner and presenting certificates to those promoted at last year's investiture, Sir John and Lady Janice Butler, promoted to Knight and Lady Commanders, and Sir Gerald and Lady Mary Glaus, promoted to Knight and Lady Commanders with Star. I am also pleased to welcome a new member to be invested in Cleveland, Father William Kessler, son of long-time members Deacon William and Patricia Kessler.

Today the Church's liturgy celebrates the Memorial of St. John Vianney. The setting in which Father Vianney found himself as a parish priest was a community indifferent to the faith. John Vianney grew up during the French Revolution. In Paris and other cities, angry mobs killed the powerful and wealthy. Because the Church was often seen as siding with the rich, many priests were also killed. Those that were left were forced to go into hiding. A priest would sometimes celebrate Mass in Dardilly, the village where John lived. By the time John was in his teens, Mass could be said in public. There was still a shortage of priests, and John wanted to become one. When John was twenty, his parents finally let him enter the seminary. John had trouble with his studies. After he failed his

examinations, he was ordained anyway because he was so prayerful and committed to his ministry.

John was soon appointed curé (French for “parish priest”) of Ars, a small parish where the people were described as indifferent to their faith. John prayed for them, began religious education classes and began an orphanage. John reached out most powerfully in the sacrament of reconciliation. He heard confessions for up to twelve hours a day in the summer and up to sixteen hours a day in the winter because he understood that people needed a connection with God.

Just as the people of post-revolutionary France were indifferent and even hostile to the faith, we find ourselves facing similar indifference and even hostility in our time and sometimes right here in our State capital. Like St. John Vianney, we unfortunately live in a time when even many people who call themselves Catholic do not live as Christians should. We have far too many supposedly Catholic politicians and government leaders who are quick to call themselves Catholic in order to win your Catholic votes, but who turn their back on the faith when it comes to putting Catholic values into action. For example, the Holy Father has made it clear that a politician cannot be “pro-choice,” that is, pro-abortion, and still be

considered a good Catholic. Yet there are sadly many Catholic mayors, governors, legislators, senators, and judges who try to perpetrate a fraud on us by telling us they're Catholic but apparently don't believe abortion is wrong, won't do anything to stop it, and even, in some cases, promote abortion as if this were morally acceptable. Well, such Catholics are dead wrong and have not "learned Christ."

My dear brothers and sisters in Christ, as members of the Equestrian Order of the Holy Sepulchre of Jerusalem, we are pledged to help the Church and defend the faith in the Holy Land. That is the Order's mission and objective. But such efforts must also begin at home. I pray that as good Catholics desirous for heaven, you will work to support the teachings of the Catholic Church, to defend the Holy Father and your bishop, to promote and protect traditional marriage and family life, and to safeguard the lives of all human beings, from conception to natural death. In this way, you will fulfill the sacred mission entrusted to us by our Lord Jesus.

May God give us this grace. Amen.