

**Catholic Daughters of the America**  
**Dinner for the 100<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of Court 148**  
**June 11, 2001**

**+ Most Reverend Thomas John Paprocki**  
**Bishop of Springfield in Illinois**

[My brother priests and deacons], Worthy Regent [Lois Jirgal], National Officers of the Catholic Daughters of the Americas, members of Court Madonna, brothers and sisters all: I am very happy to be with you this evening to celebrate the 100<sup>th</sup> anniversary of Court 148 of the Catholic Daughters of the Americas.

It was one hundred years ago this very day that your Court, together with four others, was established. Sadly, we know that of these original five courts, only yours remains. This reality is a testimony to your faith and to your cooperation these many years with the grace the Lord has given you.

As we await tonight the great Solemnity of Pentecost, it is a fitting moment for us to reflect on the motto of your fine and distinguished organization: unity and charity.

In the outpouring of the Holy Spirit, we see both unity and charity at play in the lives of the Apostles and of the whole Church. One might say that unity and charity are interconnected and inseparable.

The Apostles were gathered together in the Upper Room, with Mary, awaiting the fulfillment of the Jesus' promise that he would send the Holy Spirit upon them (cf. Luke 24:49). In their vigil, we see the importance of remaining in the community of the faithful. The Holy Spirit did not descend upon them as individuals, but as the college of the Twelve. In this context, we recall the words of the Lord Jesus: "For where two or three are gathered together in my name, there am I in the midst of them" (Matthew 18:20).

In much the same way, the Holy Spirit comes upon us, not as individuals, but as members of the faithful. We first received the gift of the Holy Spirit in Baptism, when we were incorporated into the Church, the Body of Christ. We were sealed with the seven-fold gifts of the Spirit when the faith of Jesus Christ was confirmed in us, so that we might give a clear witness to the Gospel of Christ, to the faith given us in Baptism.

This weekend we plead with the Lord: "Send out your Spirit, and renew the face of the earth" (Psalm 104:30). Each of us needs daily to call upon the Holy Spirit, to ask for an increase and strengthening of his gifts. In order to receive such a blessing, we do well to remain united to the Church.

The Catholic Daughters of the Americas seeks to keep its members united together, bound one to another by the faith of the Church; this is the very root of the word 'religion,' to be bound together. Certainly this desire of the Catholic Daughters of the Americas is prompted by the Holy Spirit, who draws the nations together in Christ.

But what, then, are we to say of charity, the second part of your motto? It is the same Holy Spirit who draws us together that strengthens us also for the works of charity. With His power, the Apostles proclaimed the Gospel with great boldness in the streets of Jerusalem and all who heard their words understood what they proclaimed; the Apostles spoke in tongues, as the early Church understood this gift of the Spirit, and all understood.

The proclamation of the Gospel, the work of bringing others to Christ, is the highest form of charity, and it is this very proclamation that keeps us in unity.

For one hundred years now, Court 148 of the Catholic Daughters of the Americas has labored greatly to remain united in the faith of the Church through your works of charity. Many of these works follow the example of Martha, who looked to the

demands of hospitality; other works you undertake follow the example of Mary, who sat at the feet of Jesus and learned from him (cf. Luke 10:38-42).

These two works of charity, of service and of prayer, must always remain united, lest your preparations become mere toil and your prayer lose sight of the love of neighbor.

Although I am relatively new to this Diocese of Springfield in Illinois and to this Capital City, I am grateful for your many efforts for the Church this past century. I thank you for your generous service to, and support of, our parishes and priests. Without your loving and diligent efforts for the good of the Church, who can say where we would be.

Undoubtedly, maintaining an organization as beneficial to the Church and to your individual members is no simple achievement. I give thanks tonight to Almighty God for the countless blessings he has bestowed upon through your efforts and prayers, and I congratulate you most heartily.

May the Holy Spirit continue to animate and enliven your works and prayers, increase your numbers, and keep you together in unity and charity. May God give us this grace. Amen.