

**Opening School Mass and Dedication of Blessed Sacrament Chapel
Holy Family Parish**

**Granite City, Illinois
August 26, 2011**

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

Reverend Father, dear school children, brothers and sisters in Christ, we have gathered here today around the altar of the Lord because we have heard his words, “Do this in remembrance of me” (I Corinthians 11:24). Our souls hunger for him and so we come to him to receive the food that satisfies the desire of our souls.

Earlier this week I returned from Madrid, Spain where I attended the World Youth Day with more than one and a half million young Catholics from every country of the world. We gathered in Madrid around Pope Benedict XVI to be strengthened by him in the faith and to learn from him how to be rooted and built up in the faith, firm in Jesus Christ (cf. Colossians 2:7).

The central event of the World Youth Day was composed of two parts: a great Prayer Vigil on Saturday night and the Holy Mass on Sunday. In this way, the Eucharist, the Body and Blood of Christ, remained at the center of all of our activities.

During the Prayer Vigil, a heavy rain poured down upon the pilgrims, many of whom had spent the day in the hot sun; a great wind blew, taking off many hats, stressing umbrellas and even bringing down tents; lightning, too, flashed across the sky. But the youth remain with Pope Benedict to learn from him. When a deacon proclaimed the words of the Lord Jesus, "Remain in my love," the pilgrims erupted in great applause and cries of gladness and confident trust. Tired, hot and drenched, the pilgrims would not run because of the storm, but chose to remain in the love of Jesus Christ.

When the rain subsided, the Blessed Sacrament was exposed in the monstrance and set before the pilgrims for everyone to adore the Lord Jesus present in the Eucharist. There, at the air base outside of Madrid, more than a million people joined together in the *silent* adoration of God. This silent prayer was very powerful indeed.

Earlier in the evening, Pope Benedict said to us, "I now ask you to 'abide' in the adoration of Christ, truly present in the Eucharist. I ask you to enter into conversation with him, to bring before him your questions and to listen to his voice."¹ The youth of the world learned from their Holy Father and brought their

concerns before the Lord in silence; they looked at him and let him look at them. Together, we turned to the Lord in friendship.

Perhaps, dear students, you have not yet had the opportunity to spend time silently adoring the Lord outside of Mass. Soon you will have the opportunity to do so at school when I dedicate the Eucharistic Chapel in Holy Family School. As the Eucharist was the center of the World Youth Day, so he will be the center of your school; indeed, Jesus must be the center of our lives!

Dear parents, do not forget to join your children in adoration of the Lord in the Blessed Sacrament. As you run your daily errands with your children and drive past the church, stop in to offer a prayer to the Lord. Spend a few quiet moments in his presence and experience the grace of his love and peace. Your children need the example of your faith and need to see what they learn in school reinforced at home. I beg you, teach them to love Jesus and the Church and, with them, learn to love Jesus and the Church more deeply.

After we receive at this Mass the Body and Blood of Jesus which joins us to him and gives us a sharing in his life, we will process solemnly from the church to the school with Jesus. As we

walk with the Blessed Sacrament, it is a reminder to us that Jesus walks each day with us, but we are not always aware of his presence in our lives. This is a great tragedy and the source of many heartaches today.

With the Pope, I, too, urge you to remain in and with Jesus. Visit him often and speak to him in the silence of your hearts. With Mary and Joseph, look to him and learn from him; ask him what is that he wants you do to, what is it that you lead you to holiness and happiness. He will never abandon you; do not abandon him! “Christ alone can respond to your aspirations. Let yourselves be seized by God, so that your presence in the Church will give her new life!”²

Pope Benedict XVI went to Madrid to inspire and teach the youth of the world, but at Madrid the youth of the world also inspired and taught him. At the end of the Prayer Vigil, the Holy Father, clearly touched by the conviction of the youth to remain with him, said to them, “I thank you for the fine example that you have given. As happened tonight, you can always, with Christ, endure the trials of life. Do not forget this.”³

Dear students, the Lord has said, “unless you turn and become like children, you will not enter the kingdom of heaven” (Matthew 18:3). The Church needs the example of the simplicity of your faith, of your sincere trust in God and confidence in his goodness. The Church also needs your enthusiasm and your joy. Do not be afraid to inspire and teach the adults around you how to follow Jesus, how to be truly happy and fulfilled in this life.

If you stay close to him and maintain an intimate friendship with him, you will grow in holiness. And the more holy you become the more you will experience lasting joy and peace.

As you begin your studies this school year, I urge you, with your classmates and your teachers, to seek the truth, which is not a thing but a person, Jesus Christ. “Do not be satisfied with anything less than Truth and Love, do not be content with anything less than Christ.”⁴

May God give us this grace. Amen.

¹ Pope Benedict XVI, Homily, August 20, 2011.

² *Ibid.*

³ *Ibid.*

⁴ *Ibid.*