

**Closing Address for the  
Diocesan Adult Education Conference  
November 5, 2012**

**Decatur Convention Center and Hotel  
Decatur, Illinois**

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

I. Vision statement from Deanery Welcome Masses, Sept. 2010:

- a. "So what is my vision as the Bishop of this diocese?"
- "I see a local Church where Catholics take their faith seriously, seek to grow in virtue and holiness, go to Mass every Sunday and participate regularly and actively in the sacramental life of the Church and the activities of their parishes; love God with all their heart and mind and soul and love their neighbor as themselves; bear witness to Christ in their daily lives; and promote respect for all human life from conception to natural death.
- "I see a diocese where there is an abundance of vocations of young people willing to answer God's call to follow Him and dedicate their lives to carrying out His mission in the world; where there are sufficient priests to staff our parishes and serve their parishioners with virtuous commitment and impeccable integrity; devoted

deacons, nuns and religious brothers dedicated to teaching the faith and caring for the sick, the poor, and the dying.

- “I see communities where family life is valued, homes with a mother and a father who love their children and whose children love them; parents who educate and form their children and themselves in the Catholic faith.
- “In short, I see a glimpse of God’s Kingdom already foreshadowed in the life of the Church and a foretaste of the heavenly banquet in the Eucharistic feast.

b. “All of this might sound like Utopia and in many ways it is admittedly idealistic. The fact that goals are lofty does not make them unreachable. Everything that I have described is attainable.”

II. “So what stands in our way?”

a. “The only real obstacle that prevents this vision from becoming reality in fact is *sin*. Original sin is our inherited condition not as some sort of communicable disease, but it affects us more like beneficiaries of an estate whose ancestors squandered a fortune. We have to live with the fact that the

spiritual treasures of paradise were forfeited by our human ancestors. While Christ's death and resurrection have restored the gifts of heavenly treasures for us, we also have to recognize that the devil, Satan, is real, and he will do everything in his power to deflect us from our goal, which is eternal life on high with Christ in His kingdom.

- b. "This reality should neither frighten us nor lead us to despair, for Christ is more powerful than Satan. Christ indeed has conquered sin and death. That is why it is good to remember the Prayer to St. Michael, which used to be prayed after every Mass and which we could still pray beneficially for our spiritual well-being."

### III. What is the work of the devil?

- a. Extraordinary: diabolical possession
- b. Ordinary:
  - i. Temptation (cf. Jesus in the desert)
  - ii. False accusations: Satan = the Accuser; Jesus says that the Devil is a liar and the father of lies" (John 8:44)
  - iii. Devil = the divider; the devil brings division

IV. How do we overcome the work of the devil:

- a. Extraordinary: exorcism (major and minor)
- b. Ordinary: the spiritual weapons of the Church – sacraments, daily prayers (especially the Rosary), religious devotions, meditation, adoration, corporal and spiritual works of mercy.

V. Three points of emphasis that I wish to stress as your bishop:

- a. Relationships
  - i. After Jesus' exorcism of the demoniac in Mark 5:18-20 –  
“As Jesus was getting into the boat, the man who had been possessed by the demon begged to go with him.  
<sup>19</sup>Jesus did not let him, but said, “Go home to your own people and tell them how much the Lord has done for you, and how he has had mercy on you.” <sup>20</sup>So the man went away and began to tell in the Decapolis how much Jesus had done for him. And all the people were amazed.”
  - ii. Dual commandments to love God and neighbor
  - iii. Pastor = shepherd = gathering the flock (cf. crozier)
  - iv. Communion of the Saints

- b. Leadership:
  - i. “We have always believed that building strong leaders is a strategic imperative. When times are easy, leadership can be taken for granted. When the world is turbulent, you appreciate great people. Ultimately, we want to develop people who are guardians of [our] culture, champions of our legacy, and protectors of our reputation. They must perform with integrity, be disciplined and aggressive – and, at the same time, able to solve problems with global ingenuity.” (Jeff Immelt, CEO of General Electric in GE’s 2007 Annual Report).
  - ii. We need these kinds of leaders in the Church: vocations to the priesthood, diaconate, consecrated life, lay leaders in the Church and in the world.

## VI. Holiness

- a. Blessed John Paul II, in his Apostolic Letter, *NOVO MILLENNIO INEUNTE*, “On entering the New Millennium,” (nos. 30-31): “First of all, I have no hesitation in saying that all pastoral initiatives must be set in relation to *holiness*. . . . To ask

catechumens: "Do you wish to receive Baptism?" means at the same time to ask them: "Do you wish to become holy?" It means to set before them the radical nature of the Sermon on the Mount: "Be perfect as your heavenly Father is perfect" (Mt 5:48).

- b. Spiritual life + action in the world (cf. Mother Theresa).
- c. From the homily given at the canonization of Saint Martin de Porres by Blessed John XXIII, pope (cf. Office of Readings for November 3):

"The example of Martin's life is ample evidence that we can strive for holiness and salvation as Christ Jesus has shown us: first, by loving God *with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your mind; and second, by loving your neighbor as yourself.*

... The virtuous example and even the conversation of this saintly man exerted a powerful influence in drawing men to religion. It is remarkable how even today his influence can still move us toward the things of heaven. Sad to say, not all of us understand these spiritual values as well as we should, nor do we give them a proper place in our lives. Many of us, in fact, strongly attracted by sin, may look upon these values as of little