

**Homily for the Funeral Mass for the
Reverend Kenneth J. Venvertloh**

October 24, 2012

Immaculate Conception Church of Blessed Sacrament Parish, Quincy

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

Reverend Fathers and Deacons, [consecrated women,] dear brothers and sisters in Christ, today, as we grieve the loss of our brother, we hear the words of the Lord Jesus Christ, “Blessed are they who mourn, for they will be comforted” (Matthew 5:4). In what, then, is our comfort?

Our comfort comes from the hope we have in the promise that “grace and mercy are with his holy ones, and his care is with his elect” (Wisdom 3:9). His grace and mercy are first given us in the waters of Baptism, when we become members of his body, the Church, and receive the promise of eternal life. Being clothed in Christ, we become the children of God and are called to conform our lives to his in all things. Our comfort is found in the very reality of Baptism: that those who have died with Christ in the waters of Baptism will live with him. Yes, our hope in the resurrection is full of immortality (cf. Wisdom 3:4)

Many years ago, a young Kenneth Venvertloh heard the exhortation Saint Paul addressed to another young man. These words he took to heart: “Proclaim the word; be persistent whether it is convenient or inconvenient; convince, reprimand, encourage through all patience and teaching” (II Timothy 4:2).

Through these words, he heard the Lord calling him to share in his priesthood and to be sent out in his name to continue his mission and ministry in central Illinois in the twentieth century. Hearing this call, Father Venvertloh answered in humble trust and offered himself in the service of God and of man.

For forty-five years he labored humbly and diligently in the Lord’s vineyard, with a particular concern for the poor and the underprivileged. He recognized in the Beatitudes Jesus himself, for it was Jesus who became poor for us; it was Jesus who mourned for Jerusalem; it was Jesus who showed us the beauty of being meek; it was Jesus who spent countless days fasting for us; it was Jesus who brought the infinite riches of the mercy and love of the Father for us through his own death on the cross. Father Venvertloh devoted himself to the pastoral care of the poor because he knew

that in serving them he served Jesus himself. What is more, Father Venvertloh sought to embrace the Beatitudes in his own life. He hungered and thirsted for righteousness and sought to be a peacemaker; now we pray that the kingdom of heaven will be his.

As Bishop of this local Church, I wish to express my gratitude for Father Venvertloh's generous service from one end of the Diocese of Springfield in Illinois to the other. He helped those entrusted to his pastoral care encounter the merciful love of God and there are many who remain indebted to his ministry.

I thank you, Father Venvertloh's family, for sharing your brother and uncle with us these many years and I assure you of my continued prayers for you.

Today, dear brothers and sisters, we have come to the altar of God to commend our brother to the just and merciful God. We pray that, having been tried in his final days, he will be taken to the Lord and awarded the crown of righteousness (cf. Wisdom 3:6; II Timothy 4:8).

As we offer in a few moments the Eucharistic sacrifice which the Lord offered for us, let us commend our brother into the

merciful hand of God. May God who is faithful reward his faithful servant and priest and say to him, “Rejoice and be glad, for your reward will be great in heaven” (Matthew 5:12).

May God give us this grace. Amen.