

**Homily for the Curia Day of Prayer Mass
October 23, 2013**

**Villa Maria Retreat and Conference Center
Springfield**

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

My dear brothers and sisters in Christ, in the conclusion of our Gospel for today we hear the following words: "Much will be required of the person entrusted with much, and still more will be demanded of the person entrusted with more" (Lk 12:48). These words strike me as being particularly relevant to us as we gather here for this curia day of prayer.

These words come at the conclusion of the explanation of the parable of the steward given by Jesus to Peter. They serve as a reminder to him and the other Apostles of the great responsibility that they will have in their ministry to the Church. It is therefore necessary that they practice good stewardship in caring for the many souls who have been entrusted to their care. This responsibility continues to their successors, the bishops. As one of those successors to the Apostles, I take this charge very seriously to ensure the spiritual well-being of the flock entrusted to my care here in the Diocese of Springfield in Illinois.

The tasks of the bishop, as you well know, are many and it is impossible for me to attend to everything that needs to be done in serving the people of our diocese. For that reason, there are individuals and institutions that assist me “in the governance of the whole diocese, especially in guiding pastoral action, in caring for the administration of the diocese, and in exercising judicial power.”¹ This is what we refer to as the diocesan curia, of which all of you are a member.

This past August at the annual Bishop’s Gift Society banquet for the beginning of the Annual Catholic Services Appeal, I commented that the faithful of the diocese are sometimes at a loss on how to describe what ACSA does and how it serves to support the many services which work to assist the faithful of our diocese in living out their faith. The danger is to see ACSA as just another way of asking for money without understanding how that money is applied. A similar danger can exist on the other side of the coin. We can, at times, become so focused on the ordinary tasks that we do on a daily basis in the curia that we fail to see the larger picture. It is therefore helpful for us to step back from time to time to be reminded that what we do in our daily lives is not just a set of disconnected tasks, but that they are all aligned to the one goal of serving the people of God in our

diocese. When we look at it from this perspective, we can see how fitting these words of the Gospel are for us, for much has indeed been entrusted to us as we seek to provide for the spiritual well-being of the souls here in central Illinois.

Aware of this responsibility, we should be mindful that the Lord asks us to be good stewards of the many gifts that He has given to us so that we can share them with our people to assist them in their journey of faith. As a bishop, I am required to make an annual retreat for internal spiritual renewal so as to be a more effective steward in shepherding the people of God. By analogy, I think we could say that it is important for those who assist me in my leadership of the diocese to have an opportunity for a similar type of renewal. Having an opportunity such as this day of prayer is directed toward that end. I am also grateful to Monsignor Kemme, Vicar General and Moderator of the Curia, for his generosity in offering Mass on a regular basis at the pastoral center to assist in this renewal. I also encourage you to draw upon the spiritual practices of regular confession and daily prayer to assist you in your lives. In doing so, you will be better prepared to assist me and the Church in our mission to promote the growth of the faith in each individual and in our Catholic community.

By being rooted in our understanding of our participation in this mission entrusted to us through this interior renewal, we are also able to hear these words from the Gospel with a greater sense of peace. It can be tempting to feel anxiety when we hear words like this which speak about much being demanded of us. In reality, these words should serve as a reminder to take our responsibilities seriously, being diligent about the work we have been asked to do, but always doing so within the context of knowing the great privilege we have of serving our people. Our work, when seen as a whole, contributes to the sanctification of our people and to the advancement of truth and justice in our world, clearing the way for the Gospel to spread to all peoples. To put it more simply, we have the blessed opportunity to work each day for the preparation of the coming of the Kingdom and the salvation of souls. What could be more fulfilling than that?

As your bishop, I want to express my gratitude to all of you for the various ways that you assist me in my ministry. Your expertise in various areas of the life of the Church allow me to be more effective in ensuring that we are providing the best care possible for our people. It is my prayer that this day of prayer will be a time of renewal for all of you so that you

may be ever more committed to being good stewards in the great work we share of spreading the Gospel and assisting the people of our diocese to reach the goal of sharing in the Resurrection.

May God give us this grace. Amen.

¹ *Code of Canon Law*, c. 469.