

**HOMILY FOR THE ALL-CITY LITURGY FOR
SPRINGFIELD CATHOLIC SCHOOLS, GRADES 3-12**

**Sacred Heart-Griffin High School Football Stadium
September 9, 2013**

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

S.S.P. Saying YES to God's love will change your life – for all eternity!

I. Story of 13-year old girl, Veronica, and her 9-year old brother, Eugene

A. Asked to be baptized at their own initiative

B. Motivation: to be able to go to the Sacrament of Reconciliation!

C. She is an intentional Catholic.

1. This has stayed with her all her life; she is now in her 80's.

2. Her faith means so much to her, she still goes to Mass every day.

3. I know her story well – Veronica is my mother!

II. What can you learn from the example of this 13-year old girl?

A. Your faith will be meaningful for you if you come to appreciate it, accept it and commit yourself to living your faith because it means something to you personally.

B. This is something you can do, even at a young age. You don't need to wait until you're older.

C. If you do this, it will change your life forever!

- III. So the question is: what does your Catholic faith mean to you?
- A. Another way of asking the question: do you believe that God loves you?
1. In our minds, we may say yes, but in our hearts, we have doubts.
 2. Test those doubts by asking: do you love yourself?
- B. My guess is that many people have a hard time loving themselves.
1. Sure, many people are selfish, only wanting to please themselves.
 2. But selfishness is not the same as loving yourself. In fact some people are selfish because they are dissatisfied with themselves, feeling they are not smart enough, not athletic enough, not talented enough, not attractive enough.
 3. We wonder: if I don't even love myself, how could God possibly love me?
- C. The key, then, to our faith is to believe that God truly loves us, even with our faults and imperfections.
- IV. Practicing our faith is simply responding to God's love.
- A. Too often we think of religion as a set of rules that say NO.
- B. True faith is saying YES to God's love.
- C. When we say YES to love, it changes our lives.
1. When a couple gets married, they say YES to each other.
 2. This YES has implications, that often mean saying NO to other desires.

3. This YES means that we will study and learn more about our faith – that is the main reason why you are attending a Catholic school!
 4. This YES means that we will serve others in need out of love for them.
- V. Our ultimate goal is to get to heaven, to share in God’s love forever.
- A. Christ gave us the Church to help us to attain that goal through the sacraments, such as the Eucharist that we are about to receive in this Mass.
 - B. But this goal is not just for ourselves; that would be selfish.
 - C. Jesus tells us to invite others to join us on our journey of faith.
 - D. We need to bring others to the Lord, the way my mother took her brother by the hand and took him to church to be baptized.
- VI. So, I wish to end with a song about how much Jesus loves us.

This song is by Brian Littrell, who achieved success as the lead singer for the Back Street Boys. I sang this song at my installation as Bishop of our diocese three years ago in our Cathedral, and I wish to sing it again with you now.

All my life I've heard Him say

(Choir: Jesus loves you!)

I dropped down on my knees to pray

(Choir: Jesus loves you!)

I asked Him to come into me

(Choir: Jesus loves you!)

From Him He gives eternity

(*Choir: Jesus loves you*)

Yes He does

(*Choir: Jesus loves you*)

Say yes He does

(*Choir: Jesus loves you*)

Yes He does ...

For the Bible tells us so

You need to look inside yourself

(*Choir: Jesus loves you!*)

You can't take with you all your wealth

(*Choir: Jesus loves you!*)

He will give to you an inner strength

(*Choir: Jesus loves you!*)

He walked on water but you will sink

(*Choir: Jesus loves you*)

Yes He does

(*Choir: Jesus loves you*)

Say yes He does

(*Choir: Jesus loves you*)

Yes He does ...

For the Bible tells us so

Said He's the One that died for me

(Choir: Jesus loves you!)

And that's the reason I believe

(Choir: Jesus loves you!)

And He has done the same for you

(Choir: Jesus loves you!)

So watch and see what He can do

(Choir: Jesus loves you)

Yes He does

(Choir: Jesus loves you)

Say yes He does

(Choir: Jesus loves you)

Yes He does ...

For the Bible tells us ... so