

**Homily for Tuesday of the Fifth Week in Ordinary Time
February 12, 2013**

**St. Joseph's Home
Springfield, Illinois**

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

Father Kraft, consecrated women, my dear brothers and sisters in Christ, I am happy to be with you again this year so near to the memorial of Saint Valentine. I hope that my presence with you today is a demonstration of your remembrance in my prayers and of my gratitude for the many prayers you have offered for me and for my ministry as your Bishop.

We sometimes forget that the color red is associated with St. Valentine's Day because Valentine died as a martyr. Valentine was a holy priest in Rome, who assisted the martyrs in the persecution under Claudius II. He was apprehended, and sent by the emperor to the prefect of Rome, who, on finding all his promises to make him renounce his faith ineffectual, commanded him to be beaten with clubs, and afterwards, to be beheaded. He was executed on February 14, about the year 270. So instead of

celebrating some sort of syrupy sentimentality, I suggest that St. Valentine's Day focus more on the sacrifices that true love demands of us.

Yesterday, Pope Benedict XVI offered for us just such an example when he announced his intention to resign his office as Bishop of Rome at 8:00 p.m. Roman time February 28, 2013. When he addressed the College of Cardinals to inform them of what he called "a decision of great importance for the life of the Church," Pope Benedict said:

After having repeatedly examined my conscience before God, I have come to the certainty that my strengths, due to an advanced age, are no longer suited to an adequate exercise of the Petrine ministry. I am well aware that this ministry, due to its essential spiritual nature, must be carried out not only with words and deeds, but no less with prayer and suffering. However, in today's world, subject to so many rapid changes and shaken by questions of deep relevance for the life of faith, in order to govern the barque of Saint Peter and proclaim the Gospel, both strength of mind and body are necessary, strength which in the last few months, has deteriorated in me to the extent that I have had to recognize my incapacity to adequately fulfill the ministry entrusted to me.

It is no secret that in recent months the various duties of the Holy Father have been weighing more heavily upon him as the effects of his advanced age also settle more heavily upon him; will reach eighty-six years of age on April 16th. You, dear brothers and sisters, can well understand the Pope's desire to resign his office for a time of rest and serenity.

When he visited St. Peter's Residence, a home for older people in London, in September of 2010, the Pope said a few words he might well say to you here at St. Joseph's Home:

...I come among you not only as a father, but also as a brother who knows well the joys and the struggles that come with age. Our long years of life afford us the opportunity to appreciate both the beauty of God's greatest gift to us, the gift of life, as well as the fragility of the human spirit. Those of us who live many years are given a marvelous chance to deepen our awareness of the mystery of Christ, who humbled himself to share in our humanity. As the normal span of our lives increases, our physical capacities are often diminished; and yet these times may well be among the most spiritually fruitful years of our lives. These years are an opportunity to remember in affectionate prayer all those whom we have cherished in this life, and

to place all that we have personally been and done before the mercy and tenderness of God. This will surely be a great spiritual comfort and enable us to discover anew his love and goodness all the days of our life.¹

This decision of the Holy Father to put the good of the Church before his own good demonstrates that his heart is close to the Lord (cf. Isaiah 29:13).

Today, my friends, whose hearts are also close to the Lord, I ask you to offer your sufferings and inconveniences for Pope Benedict XVI. Pray for him, and ask the Lord to grant him peace in the days to come, which will be filled with uncertainty even as they are guided by the Holy Spirit. Let us pray that as Pope Benedict seeks to enter into his “seventh day” that he will find in it much rest (cf. Genesis 2:4).

May God give us this grace. Amen.

¹ Pope Benedict XVI, Address to the Residents of St. Peter’s Residence, September 18, 2010.