

**Homily for the Blessing and Dedication of St. Joseph's Hospital  
Highland**

**June 23, 2013**

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

Dear brother priests (and deacons), consecrated religious, President Sebastian, members of the Board of Directors, doctors, nurses, and staff, my dear brothers and sisters in Christ, as we gather today to bless and dedicate this new hospital campus, we cannot help but recall the many dedicated souls who have labored so diligently out of love for Christ in caring for the sick among us.

You know your own roots well, how 135 years ago two Hospital Sisters of St. Francis came to Highland at the request of Father Joseph Meckel. In those early days the Sisters relied on the generous cooperation of the parishioners and community to tend to the needs of the sick and to provide for them adequate care.

Reflecting for a moment on these humble beginnings in which the Sisters begged for basic necessities and lived in the same building in which they tended the sick, we can see something of the reflection of Saint Joseph, the patron of this hospital. Throughout the Scriptures the foster father of

Jesus speaks not a word, but there is a sense of his continual presence. With his quiet strength he cared for Mary and her Son and tended their earthly and spiritual needs without seeking attention for himself. Throughout these many years, the Sisters and staff of St. Joseph Hospital have looked to their heavenly patron to continue their dedicated service; may it always remain so! Saint Joseph kept as his first concern his loving work of caring for Jesus; may your first concern always be your loving work of caring for Jesus as he comes to you in those who ill, with those with whom he closely associates himself because they carry his cross.

Since the first 12-bed hospital was built in 1879, the Hospital Sisters of St. Francis have continued to expand their care of the sick, but without the generous cooperation of the people of Highland and the surrounding communities, such an expansion would not have been possible. This continued cooperation is what allows us to dedicate today this new 25-bed hospital which will enhance the healthcare that can be given to the residents of Madison County.

For your generous support of the important work of the Sisters, I extend my sincere gratitude. Your goodness will allow the Sisters and those who work so closely with them "to reveal and embody Christ's

healing love for all people through [their] high-quality Franciscan health care ministry.”

Because the mission of the Hospital Sisters of St. Francis impels them to “foster healing, serve with compassion, and promote wellness for all persons, with special attention to our brothers and sisters who are poor, underserved and most vulnerable,” the work of St. Joseph Hospital is a fitting way to heed the call of Pope Francis to go out of ourselves in order to bring the Gospel to every person.

This what Saint Francis of Assisi did when he established the Order of Friars Minor; he sent them out to proclaim the love of God far and wide. This is what we, too, must do, each in our own way.

May God give us this grace. Amen.