

**Homily for Mass for Father McGivney Catholic High School
and Feeder Schools followed by
Groundbreaking and Blessing of Site for New High School Building**

**St. Boniface Parish
Edwardsville, IL**

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My dear brothers and sisters in Christ, as many of you know, I have a great love for sports. I enjoy both being a spectator and a participant in sports, particularly with my favorite sport of hockey. My greatest love, however, is the love that I have for my faith. It is out of these two loves that I was prompted to write a book titled: *Holy Goals for Body and Soul – 8 Steps to Connect Sports with God and Faith*. This book offers some reflections on how different aspects of sports can deepen our appreciation for our faith and so aid us in living lives of greater wholeness and holiness.

As a person who loves both sports and faith, I have been asked on several occasions whether I pray to win. My answer, to the surprise of some, is no. That is not to say that I do not like to win. I love to win and I am as competitive as anybody else, but I do not pray to win. My prayer, instead, is that I use the gifts that God has given to me to the best of my

ability. Regardless of whether I win or lose, if I have done my best, I know that I have given glory to God by being a good steward of what He has given to me. Sometimes, the other team or the other person is better than we are, and as long as we have done our best with what we have, there is no shame in losing. But if we play our best and the other team doesn't, there's a good chance we'll win even if they are more talented than we are!

In our Gospel for today's Mass, we hear Jesus tell His followers that "[n]o one who lights a lamp conceals it with a vessel or sets it under a bed; rather, he places it on a lampstand so that those who enter may see the light." (Luke 8:16). The Lord is reminding us that those things given to us by the Lord are not meant to be hidden, but shared for the benefit of others. First and foremost, this means the gift of our faith, but it can also apply to every aspect of our lives, for every good gift that we have comes from Him and is meant to be used according to His will.

When we hear this passage, we should feel challenged by it, because it is an invitation for us to look at our own lives to see how well we have used what has been given to us by our Lord. Each of us has been given a multitude of gifts and we are expected to do something with them, not just

hiding them under a lampstand because we deem them to be unimportant or irrelevant to our lives. God wants us to be good stewards of His gifts so that they can be shared, not just to ourselves. We call this “stewardship.”

One of the major challenges that we face when speaking about stewardship is another word that ends in “ship.” That word is “ownership.” Our society in many ways encourages an entitlement mentality. This mentality basically says, “This is mine; I will do with it what I want, how I want, and when I want.” It becomes all about me and it excludes the two directions that our gifts should be directed: to God and others. This manifests itself in countless ways in our society, whether we are talking about our money, our time, or our bodies.

It is therefore important for us to be able first of all to recognize that everything that we have comes from God. While it is true that we need to cooperate, the credit goes to Him. When we make it all about ourselves, we slowly pull away from Him and others and begin to experience a life of unhappiness. Recall the example of the Prodigal Son, how he demanded from his father the inheritance that belonged to him. After what seemed to

be a promising beginning, his life quickly spiraled out of control until he hit rock bottom.

As students in Catholic schools, how do you look at the gift of our Catholic faith that you have the privilege of learning and growing in each day you go to school? Do you just see it as another class, another test to take, another activity to do, or another Mass to endure? Or, do you see this as our most valuable subject? By embracing this great gift of our Catholic faith, we prepare ourselves to make better use of *every* gift that the Lord gives to us. By having a deep, personal relationship with God, we more readily recognize that everything comes from Him. Our faith also helps us to recognize the dignity and uniqueness of each person. Out of that understanding and in gratitude for His many gifts, we will more easily want to give what we have back to Him and to those He has placed in our lives.

In addition to considering what Catholic education means to us, it is also helpful for us to look at what the gift of Catholic education means to others. First and foremost, we consider your parents. They are convinced in the value of a Catholic education to the point that they have made

sacrifices, and in many cases, significant sacrifices, to give you the opportunity to have an education rooted in our Catholic faith. They have taken their responsibility as parents seriously, understanding that you are all a gift to them given by God and they want to be good stewards of those gifts by preparing you to be the best young men and women possible. They are convinced that being in an environment where the Catholic faith is central is a key element in your lives, an element that will not just prepare you for your future careers, families, and lives, but will also prepare you for the most important goal of becoming a saint.

This afternoon, we will break ground and bless the site which will soon be the new home of Father McGivney Catholic High School. This has been made possible due only to the generosity of many people in this local area, people who, like your parents, see the value of Catholic education at the high school level. They have been willing to share the gifts that the Lord has blessed them with in order to benefit all of you, as they believe strongly in the importance of your receiving this education in order to benefit both society and the Church.

I would encourage you, then, to take some time to seriously consider the importance of your Catholic education in light of what it means to your parents and your parish communities. We all look to you with great hope, confident that you have the opportunity to bring the light of the Gospel to our world. You are receiving a precious gift in your Catholic faith, a gift that the Lord desires for you to share with generosity and joy.

As we prepare to receive our greatest gift, Jesus Himself in the Eucharist, let us thank Him for this great gift of Catholic education. May we be grateful for those many people who believe in you and who have made it possible, through their good stewardship, for you to receive this wonderful gift. Pray that you will grow in your love for your faith every day so that you will be good stewards yourselves by sharing the fruits of your faith in every aspect of your lives. By doing this, you prepare yourselves to hear those words which all Christians should long to hear at the end of our lives: “Well done, my good and faithful servant. . . . Come, share your master’s joy” (Matthew 25:21).

May God give us this grace. Amen.