

**Homily for Mass Celebrating the 90th Anniversary of
St. Bruno Parish, Chicago**

**October 3, 2015
27th Sunday in Ordinary Time - Year B**

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Bishop of Springfield in Illinois**

My dear brothers and sisters in Christ, it is good that we are here for this Mass, during which we celebrate the 90th anniversary of Saint Bruno Parish, founded by my great-uncle, Father Alexis Gorski. It has been a great privilege for me to have celebrated Mass here on many occasions, especially when I was Auxiliary Bishop of Chicago, so your parish community is familiar to me, and I commend you for the wonderful ways that the Catholic faith is lived out in the life of Saint Bruno Parish.

Just over a week ago, I, along with several other pilgrims from the Diocese of Springfield in Illinois, where I now serve as Diocesan Bishop, had the opportunity to travel to Philadelphia for the historic visit of Pope Francis to the United States. The visit of the Holy Father was in conjunction with the World Meeting of Families taking place in Philadelphia, an event which brought together more than twenty thousand

people to celebrate the gift of marriage and family life, and to learn new ways in which to spread the joy of that gift to the world around us.

At the final keynote address for the congress, Cardinal Sean O'Malley, Archbishop of Boston, told a story about a parish celebration in which he participated when he was a bishop in the West Indies. The occasion of the celebration was to recognize a couple who had been married for fifty years. Before the Mass, he asked the couple about their secret to a successful marriage. The husband responded that he and his wife, on the day of their marriage, had come up with a scientific manner in which to make all of the decisions for their life together.

When the Cardinal asked what that scientific formula looked like, the husband responded that it was really quite simple. They had decided that he would make all of the big decisions, and she would make all of the small decisions. When asked how that had worked for half a century, the husband responded that it had actually been working quite well, except that, in all in those fifty years, they had not yet had any big decisions to make!

The Cardinal was quick to remind the audience, though, that both the husband and the wife had indeed made one very important big decision

together, and that big decision was to love. That decision to love was the one that carried them day in and day out through their life with one another.

That is a very fitting way to reflect on what we celebrate today, how the parishioners of Saint Bruno Parish for ninety years have made that big decision to love one another as brothers and sisters in Christ. In this way, your parish is also a family, and every joy and blessing in your parish family has been the fruit of that decision to love, and every obstacle overcome, every issue resolved, has been because of the power of love.

The readings for today's Mass paint the wonderful picture of marriage as intended by God. From the very beginning of creation, God created man and woman to be together in a special bond of love. In the Garden of Eden, that love was lived in an ideal way in which the two looked upon one another as the perfect complement to each other, and their two lives truly became "one flesh" (Genesis 2:24).

Unfortunately, this love did not last, due to the wickedness of the Devil, who entered into the picture and tempted Adam and Eve to disobey God by eating the forbidden fruit. After doing so, the Book of Genesis says that "the eyes of both of them were opened, and they knew that they were

naked; so they sewed fig leaves together and made loincloths for themselves” (Genesis 3:7). This is significant, because it shows that one of the results of their disobedience to God was a disruption in the perfect love that they experienced with one another before the Fall.

They hid themselves from one another because they felt shame. They knew that the other person could now look upon them no longer with a pure gaze, but with one that sees the other as an object for their own pleasure, as opposed to the gift that they were intended to be for one another. This wound in interpersonal relationships would go on to affect all of their offspring through what we call original sin. We see it already in their children, as Cain killed Abel out of jealousy. And there are so many more examples throughout the Scriptures of how this original wound has affected our relationships with one another.

The Letter to the Hebrews speaks about how God, in His great love for us, even when we had turned away from Him, did not want to leave us in this state of separation from Him and one another, and so He sent His Son into the world, to become “lower than the angels” (Hebrews 2:9) to heal what had been wounded by our disobedience.

In a very particular way, as we hear in the Gospel, He came to heal that most intimate relationship of man and woman in marriage. He instituted the Sacrament of Matrimony. The sacraments grant us a share in the very life of God, and since "God is love" (1 John 4:16), as St. John tells us, the sacraments give us a share in His love, that perfect love which sin cannot weaken or break. His gift of this sacrament to the Church was His specific desire to return man and woman back to the gift of love He desired for them in marriage from the beginning.

It is so important for us to recognize this dynamic of God's love for us. After ninety years as a Catholic family of faith here at Saint Bruno Parish, I hope that you can truly appreciate just how wonderfully that love has worked in your lives and in the lives of your families. God's love has been able to take even those hard and confusing times, times when you may have wondered how you could go on another day, and brought good out of those situations. That's how good God's love is!

Let those experiences of God's love working in so many remarkable ways continue to strengthen you as you move forward. There may still be unresolved fears and anxieties, such as children and grandchildren who maybe no longer practice their Catholic faith. This is a real cross for many

couples who have loved their faith so much and worked so hard to pass it on to the next generation. There may even be some of you here who feel that weight of sorrow, even in the midst of this joyful celebration.

Do not give up hope, for God will never give up on them. I am not encouraging you to just throw your hands in the air, letting God take care of it – I'm encouraging you to keep on doing what this parish has been doing for ninety years – saying 'yes' to love every day – in one another, and in your families, in all of your actions. When you do that, you make possible the passing on of God's love, which can do so much more than we could ever imagine or hope. As St. Paul so beautifully reminds us, "We know that all things work for good for those who love God" (Romans 8:28). Your continual 'yes' to God *will* work for the good, and that is a promise we can have faith in, not because of what *we* might do, but because of what *He* will do through the love He has for all of His children, each of whom He has died for and each of whom He desires to be with for all of eternity.

Today, as we celebrate the 90th Anniversary of Catholic life at Saint Bruno Parish, we are mindful of the many ways in which the faithful here have lived great lives, not necessarily to draw attention to themselves, but to give glory to God and to reach out in love to others. The strength of this

community, especially as it concerns the Catholic faith, is a wonderful sign of vitality. It is my prayer that this Catholic community of faith will continue to be strong now and for many more years into the future.

May our reception of the Eucharist today enflame our hearts to desire to live the faith into which we have been baptized. May we never miss an opportunity to do all things, small or large, with true love. May that spirit of love for one another continue to spread throughout this parish so that this will be a place where Jesus, who welcomes us in love, is in return welcomed and loved in one another.

Let us prepare ourselves now to receive the perfect gift of love, Jesus Christ Himself, in the Holy Eucharist. May our hearts be enflamed with a greater desire to give a more resounding 'yes' to His love in all of our actions, for in doing so, we contribute in a significant way to turning our world from a culture of death to a culture of love, a culture in which the Kingdom of God is built up and the fullness of love in Heaven, meant for all of us, draws closer and closer to its fulfillment.

May God give us this grace. Amen.