

**Homily for Mass and Dedication of a New Parish Center
St. Francis Solanus Parish
Quincy, IL**

**August 15, 2015
20th Sunday in Ordinary Time - Year B**

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

My dear brothers and sisters in Christ, it is good that we are here for this Mass, after which we will celebrate the dedication of your new Parish Center here at St. Francis Solanus Parish in Quincy. As you look forward as a parish to making use of this center in the years to come, we take the opportunity to ask God to sanctify it at its beginning so that it may truly be a place where the lives of those who use it may grow closer to our Lord and one another.

The book of Proverbs that we heard in the first reading tells us that “Wisdom has built her house,” using the image of Wisdom and her banquet to show how God feeds us with knowledge and understanding. This is a prefiguring of the Eucharist.

Over the past few weeks, we have broken away from listening to the Gospel of St. Mark and have turned to the sixth chapter of the Gospel of St. John. This chapter stands out as one of the most important ones in all of

the Scriptures, as it offers us some very important teachings on the gift of the Eucharist, which, as the Catechism of the Catholic Church teaches, is “the source and summit of the Christian life.”¹ Everything that we do as Catholics leads up to or flows from this great gift of sharing in the life of Christ that comes to us in our reception of His Body and Blood in Holy Communion. For as Jesus says in the Gospel: “Whoever eats my flesh and drinks my blood remains in me and I in him.” (John 6:56). And this is the goal of our lives as Christians – to remain in communion with Him at all times.

This is at the heart of the message that St. Paul is communicating in our second reading in his Letter to the Ephesians. He warns them to “watch carefully how you live” (Ephesians 5:15). There are many ways in which we can be pulled away from this communion with Christ, and so we must undergo a constant struggle to remain close to Him and His will for us. We accomplish this most successfully when we regularly receive the gift of the Eucharist, which gives us the divine aid and nourishment to resist those things that try to lure us away from our union with Him.

Herein lies one of the most important reasons we have for coming to Mass on a weekly, if not daily, basis: to receive the graces that we need to

stay close to Him and to keep Him at the center of our daily lives. If we keep this perspective, knowing of the great benefits we receive from Him in order to face our daily struggles, we will eagerly look forward to each Mass and lovingly receive Christ into our hearts.

It is also important for us to reflect on how the Eucharist not only strengthens our communion with Christ, it also strengthens our communion with one another. By virtue of our Baptism, we have all become members of the Mystical Body of Christ. Just as our bond with Christ, who is the Head of the Body, is strengthened in our reception of the Eucharist, so too is our bond with the other members of that body strengthened. Having been strengthened in these bonds, we are better prepared to undertake the journey of discipleship, for we do not travel this path alone, but as a body. We never walk in isolation, but work together to come to the Promised Land that awaits us at the end of that journey.

One of the ways in which this communion with one another is lived out is in the context of the parish. The parish is a special place where we have the opportunity to grow in the understanding of our faith and to put it into practice in various forms of service and communal expressions of that shared faith in Jesus Christ.

The new parish center which is about to be blessed will be significant to the life of this parish as it will offer many opportunities for the members of this portion of the Mystical Body of Christ to come together and continue that journey together through the various activities that will take place here. It will be a place where the Church will be made visible in a particular way through the gathering of God's people.

In an earlier part of St. Paul's Letter to the Ephesians, he speaks about the Church as the "household of God", explaining that it has "Christ Jesus himself as the capstone. Through Him the whole structure is held together and grows into a temple sacred in the Lord" (Eph 2:20-21). The use of the word capstone, or in other translations, cornerstone, is significant here.

Just as a cornerstone is essential to the structural foundation of a building, so too with the building of God. If the foundation of what we do and who we are is not Christ, the building is bound to fail. This applies to your new parish center as well. Although it may be very well constructed with good materials that will enable it to stand for many years, if its use is not rooted in Christ, its spiritual walls will crumble.

This spiritual foundation comes from our relationship with Christ which is formed and nourished here in this church through prayer and the

sacraments, especially in the Sacrament of the Eucharist. The parish center is to be seen as an extension of what takes place here in the church. It is only through a growing relationship with Christ in each and every one of us that we are able to grow in our relationships with one another in the various activities of this parish community.

The blessing of this parish center then, should serve as a renewal in your commitment to the celebration of your faith, especially in the Mass, so that all of the activities which will take place there will be guided and sustained by the power of God, thus ensuring the greatest use of this new space as a place where you will all be built up in Christ Jesus as the household of God, pleasing to the Lord.

May God give us this grace. Amen.

¹ CCC, §1324.