

**Homily for Mass for the Bishop's Gift Society
Cathedral of the Immaculate Conception, Springfield**

**August 26, 2016
Friday of 21st Week in ordinary time**

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

My dear brothers and sisters in Christ:

It is good to be with you to celebrate this annual Mass for the Bishop's Gift Society, which supports many of the good works and apostolic activities carried out in our diocese at both the diocesan and parish levels. In this Eucharist, we give thanks to Almighty God for the bountiful gifts that He has given to us and we pray in gratitude for the generous gifts that you, the members of the Bishop's Gift Society, have given back to God through the Church as stewards of God's creation.

Both the words of our readings from St. Paul and from St. Matthew's Gospel speak of wisdom and foolishness. St. Paul understands that true wisdom comes from God alone and that everything else in the world falls short of the great gift of wisdom that God seeks to show us. The most powerful way that God shows us his wisdom is through the Cross of Christ. What appears to be utter foolishness in the eyes of the world, is

actually the only thing that truly matters. For what is of the greatest value to us is union with God, and this union, this relationship with God, is only made possible through the sacrifice of Christ upon the Cross.

To be wise is to know the value of relationship with God. Nothing else can compare to it. Even though “the earth is full of the goodness of the Lord,” as the psalmist tells us, nothing in all the world can compare to the love of the Lord. The Lord Himself is the source of all the goodness of the earth. It is out of God’s generosity that we have come to receive the good things in this life.

As the secular world looks at how the Church as a community and Christians as individuals spend their money, it may look quite foolish in their eyes. Paying tuition and providing financial support for Catholic schools seems foolish for taxpayers who are paying for public schools. The expense of priestly formation of our seminarians seems foolish to those who have no appreciation for Christian philosophy or Catholic theology, or for the parishioners’ desires to have priests to celebrate Mass and administer the sacraments. Catholic social services to feed the hungry and help for the poor make no sense to those who would simply see these matters as the responsibility of the government, not acts of charity.

We who are disciples of the Lord, we who have experienced the good things in his life, have the benefit of knowing the value of being in union with Christ. We as his disciples have the wisdom to be prepared for his coming whenever that may be. We know that it is only through prayer that we can remain vigilant for his coming. By remaining close to the Lord through the sacraments and listening to his Word spoken to us through the Scriptures, we can have the confidence of meeting the Lord at his coming.

To the outside world, one of the most foolish things we do as Catholics is what we are about to do now in the Eucharist. Non-believers see some wafers and wine, thinking us fools for believing that in these consecrated elements we receive the Real Presence of Our Lord and Savior. But for us who are believers, we know that the truly wise recognize that Christ Our Lord comes to us now in this Eucharistic feast.

May God give us this grace. Amen.