

**Mass with the Equestrian Order of the Holy Sepulchre of Jerusalem  
August 30, 2017**

**Cathedral of the Immaculate Conception  
Springfield, Illinois**

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

Reverend Fathers, Deacon(s), Esteemed Knights and Ladies, my dear brothers and sisters in Christ. It is good for us to be here to celebrate this Mass for the annual gathering of the members of the Equestrian Order of the Holy Sepulchre of Jerusalem in the Diocese of Springfield in Illinois. The Equestrian Order of the Holy Sepulchre of Jerusalem is the only lay institution of the Vatican State charged with the task of providing for the needs of the Latin Patriarchate of Jerusalem and for all the activities and initiatives which are necessary to support the Christian presence in the Holy Land. In our prayers at this Mass, we ask God to bless and strengthen the Order in its mission:

- to strengthen its members the practice of Christian life, observing as its foundation the principles of charity which make the Order a fundamental means of assistance to the Holy Land;

- to sustain and aid the charitable, cultural and social works and institutions of the Catholic Church in the Holy Land;
- to support the preservation and spread of the Faith in those lands; and
- to uphold the rights of the Catholic Church in the Holy Land.

In our first reading today, we hear Saint Paul reminding the Christians of Thessalonica how he acted when he was working and preaching among them. Taken on its own, this passage from scripture may to be prideful boasting on Saint Paul's part. However, within the context of the letter, we see later that Saint Paul goes on to exhort his readers that they too ought to imitate his example with regard to work and so live more perfect lives of discipleship through working to build up the Christian community in Thessalonica.

For us here today, this message is very timely and important for us to hear, for all of us are called to work for the spreading of the Gospel in the ordinary circumstances of our daily lives, and so contribute to the building up of the Church on in our local communities and throughout the world. The late great Pope Saint John Paul II addressed this in his Encyclical *Laborem Exercens*, when he stated:

Let the Christian who listens to the word of the living God, uniting work with prayer, know the place that his work has, not only in earthly progress, but also in the development of the Kingdom of God, to which we are all called through the power of the Holy Spirit and through the word of the Gospel.<sup>1</sup>

My dear brothers and sisters in Christ, let us take to heart these words from our late Holy Father, and commit ourselves to uniting our daily work and our Catholic identity into one, so that we might not only contribute to the secular advancement of society, but also so that we might contribute to the spiritual growth of those around us.

To you, my dear Knights and Ladies, it is my hope that each of you devote yourselves ever more intently to your work of assisting the dwindling number of Christians who live and work in the Holy Land and so ensure that the Christian faith does not become a distant memory of years gone by. Rather, through this work as well as your efforts to ensure the protection of the holy sites of pilgrimage so that Christians throughout the world may continue to have the opportunity to experience these places which serve to deepen their faith, you are making a very real and positive

contribution to those living in the Holy Land as well as to the Universal Church.

As we strive to more perfectly live as Christ's disciples and as we approach this Labor Day weekend, let us each give thanks and praise to God in this Eucharist for the gift of work, and for the opportunity to use our gifts for the work of building up the Church.

May God give us this grace. Amen.

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<sup>1</sup> Pope Saint John Paul II, *Laborem Exercens*, 14 September 1981.