

**Homily for Mass on the Occasion of the 150th Anniversary of
Quincy Notre Dame High School
at
Quincy Notre Dame High School
Quincy, Illinois**

**Solemnity of the Most Holy Trinity
June 11, 2017**

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Bishop of the Diocese of Springfield in Illinois**

Reverend Monsignors, Reverend Fathers, Consecrated Religious Sisters, Faculty and staff of Quincy Notre Dame High School, students, parents, brothers and sisters in Christ: It is good that we are here to offer thanks to our Lord in celebration of the one hundred and fifty years of Catholic Education that so many students have received at this outstanding institution of secondary education. Quincy Notre Dame High School serves not only as a beacon of light and love educating future members of our society, but forms true disciples of Jesus Christ. As we begin this celebration, it is fitting that we look to the past and our history as inspiration and hope for the future.

As someone who is deeply interested in history as well as the human experience, I could not help but wonder what life was like 150 years ago,

and I have to say that, standing here today in the year 2017, the differences in our country and world, as well as our way of life, seem vast.

In 1867 Andrew Johnson was the 17th president of the United states, Nebraska was admitted at the 37th state in these United States, and William H. Seward, the Secretary of State, purchased Alaska for a sum of 7.2 million dollars. Also in 1867, the first elevated railroad began service in New York city, the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign was established, and here in Quincy the School Sisters of Notre Dame bought the Bishop's Residence for a \$25.00 down payment. Thus, the "Convent School of Infant Jesus" opened at 8th and Vermont and within a year the enrollment of the school went from 12 to 116 students.

Over the course of the years that followed the founding of the Convent School of Infant Jesus, the school grew and changed to become the school that it is today. While not all of the changes were easy, all of them caused this community to strive continually to follow the will of our Lord more closely in their lives and to live lives of true discipleship. This, my dear brothers and sisters, is the crux of what we are about as Catholic Christian people and is the center of the mission of Catholic education: the formation of young people into true disciples of Jesus Christ.

In an address to Catholic educators during his 2008 Apostolic Visit to the United States, Pope Benedict XVI spoke to this, saying:

Education is integral to the mission of the Church to proclaim the Good News. First and foremost every Catholic educational institution is a place to encounter the living God who in Jesus Christ reveals his transforming love and truth (cf. *Spe Salvi*, 4). This relationship elicits a desire to grow in the knowledge and understanding of Christ and his teaching. In this way those who meet him are drawn by the very power of the Gospel to lead a new life characterized by all that is beautiful, good, and true; a life of Christian witness nurtured and strengthened within the community of our Lord's disciples, the Church.¹

Since 1867, the consecrated religious and lay educators of this academic institution, entrusted to the patronage of Our Lady, Notre Dame, the true model of Christian discipleship, have embraced this charism and have developed their students not only to be lifelong learners but also to lead lives of service and true discipleship.

Just a few moments ago, in our Gospel reading for today's liturgical Solemnity of the Most Holy Trinity, we heard what might be some of the most well-known words in all of sacred scripture: "God so loved the world that he gave his only Son, so that everyone who believes in him might not

perish but might have eternal life.”² My dear brothers and sisters, the fact that God lovingly gave us the greatest gift that could possibly be given, that of Jesus’ life and ministry as well as His suffering and death, in order that we might have eternal life, must cause us to realize that if God did that out of love for us, then we are called in turn to give our lives back to God through living lives of true discipleship. The love that is shared by the Holy Trinity in the communion of God the Father, God the Son and God the Holy Spirit, is the love by which we were adopted into the family of God at our baptism. The Father, the Son and the Spirit are equal to each other, yet there is only one God, sharing life, wisdom, love, and joy in a way that we cannot fully understand. Yet, like Our Lady and the educators that have formed the youth of Quincy Notre Dame High School in their lives of faith for one hundred and fifty years, we must strive to find our happiness and fulfillment in following the call of the Lord in our lives and, in turn, help others to live their lives in a way that shares the love of God.

The message of Saint John Paul II, when he addressed the young people of the Church who had gathered for World Youth Day in the Jubilee Year 2000 rings true in our lives today. He said:

It is Jesus you seek when you dream of happiness; he is waiting for you when nothing else you find satisfies you; he is the beauty to which you are so attracted; it is he who provokes you with that thirst for fullness that will not let you settle for compromise; it is he who urges you to shed the masks of a false life; it is he who reads in your hearts your most genuine choices, the choices that others try to stifle. It is Jesus who stirs in you the desire to do something great with your lives, the will to follow an ideal, the refusal to allow yourselves to be grounded down by mediocrity, the courage to commit yourselves humbly and patiently to improving yourselves and society, making the world more human and more fraternal.³

So, as we celebrate the work that has been done to form faith-filled young Catholic disciples over the past one hundred and fifty years here at Quincy Notre Dame High School, let us renew our commitment to the formation of true Christian disciples. As we enter into this Eucharist, may we grow in our awareness of the wonder of our life in God, and God's presence in our lives. May we ever seek to follow the way of Jesus over that of the world and, in doing so, enter more fully into the Trinitarian life that we are called to share for all eternity.

May God give us this grace. Amen.

¹ Meeting with Catholic Educators, Address of His Holiness Benedict XVI, Catholic University of America, Washington, D.C., April 17, 2008.

² John 3:16

³ 15th World Youth Day, Address of the Holy Father John Paul II, Vigil of Prayer, Tor Vergata, Saturday, August 19, 2000.