

**Homily for the Curial Employee Recognition Mass**

**Saint Viator Chapel  
Catholic Pastoral Center  
Springfield, Illinois**

**May 23, 2017**

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Bishop of the Diocese of Springfield in Illinois**

My dear brothers and sisters in Christ: it is good that we are here for our annual Curial Employee Recognition Mass during which we give thanks to God for the variety of gifts that each of you brings in service to the mission of this local Church.

In today's first reading we hear about the opposition that Paul and Silas encountered in their attempt to preach the word of God to the community at Philippi. While they were initially well-received there and even experienced some success, we can see that as a whole, the hearts and minds of the people of Philippi were not open to receive the message that they had come to teach and the authorities there had them arrested, beaten and imprisoned. However, these experiences did not shake the faith or commitment of Paul and Silas, as we later see that, even while in prison, they were praying and singing hymns to God. In turn, God heard their

prayers and provided them with what they needed for the success of their mission in Philippi.

I imagine, based on this account, that on a human level even Paul and Silas may have felt rejected or perhaps they even questioned whether they would have success at building up the Church in Philippi. But despite the resistance that they faced, they had faith! They had faith enough to cry out to our Lord and to ask him to provide them with the assistance that they needed to succeed in their mission. Perhaps at times, we too feel that despite our best efforts to serve God and use our gifts to build up His Church here in our diocese, that we are met with apathy, resistance or rejection. We may also feel like we are just spinning our wheels and that we will never see the success of our work. But, like Paul and Silas, we too must remember that the work we do is not successful by our efforts alone, rather, it is successful when we rely on the grace of God to bring the work that we begin to its fruition.

Our Gospel today can perhaps build on this understanding and help us recognize yet another way that we must depend on the grace of our Lord in our roles here, for just a few moments ago, we heard our Lord tell His disciples:

For if I do not go, the Advocate will not come to you.  
But if I go, I will send him to you.  
And when he comes he will convict the world  
in regard to sin and righteousness and condemnation.

At first glance, our Lord's words are perhaps quite puzzling, however, if we consider for a moment the possible meanings of the word "convict," we can recognize that Jesus is not speaking about proving someone's guilt, but rather, referring to proving someone wrong. In this sense, Jesus is sending the Holy Spirit, our Advocate, to assist us in our lives of faith and to help us re-focus our wrongful perspectives, to continue our growth so that we may see things through God's perspective, to see as He sees, and to judge as He judges.

Like Paul, Silas and the other disciples, let us carry this perspective of our reliance on the grace of the Holy Spirit forward into the very important work that we do here at the Catholic Pastoral Center. So, even if we are answering a phone call, responding to an e-mail, or working on a budget, we ask for the grace of the Holy Spirit to guide our work in a way that builds up the Church. Through our striving to see things the way that our Lord sees them, may we always seek to follow His will more closely.

May God give us this grace. Amen.