

**Homily Outline for the Gallagher Convocation
Radisson Blu Mall of America Hotel
Bloomington, Minnesota
May 23, 2018**

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Bishop of Springfield in Illinois**

S.S.P.: "You are a puff of smoke that appears briefly and then disappears" (*James 4:14*).

- I. House calls were something that I clearly remember from my childhood.
 - A. Our family doctor would make house calls when I or one of my 8 siblings was sick.
 - B. The other regular visitor who made monthly house calls was our insurance agent! His name was James Fencka and he worked for Metropolitan Life Insurance Company. He was not Catholic but was a deeply religious Christian. He even came to my first Mass as a priest 40 years ago!
 - C. I mention this because it taught me from an early age that selling insurance was more about a relationship with our family than selling us a product.
 - D. It also made me think about the nature of life insurance.
 1. Most insurance covers risks of events that may or may not occur, e.g., a fire, a fall, or unexpected surgery.
 2. I wondered how life insurance was really insurance since you knew that there was a 100% risk that those insured would die!

- II. I thought of that when I read this line from today's first reading: "You are a puff of smoke that appears briefly and then disappears" (*James 4:14*).
 - A. The reading starts out with what sounds like a good business plan: "Today or tomorrow we shall go into such and such a town, spend a year there doing business, and make a profit."
 - B. Then comes the zinger: "You have no idea what your life will be like tomorrow. You are a puff of smoke that appears briefly and then disappears."
 - C. This is followed by wise advice: "Instead you should say, 'If the Lord wills it, we shall live to do this or that.'"

- III. While we are a puff of smoke whose brief life here on earth will disappear, we have the promise and the hope of eternal life.
 - A. The Eucharist we share brings us into Communion with Christ, our Eternal High Priest, who invites us to the share in His Heavenly Banquet for all eternity.
 - B. That is the best life insurance anyone could ever ask for!
 - C. May God give us this grace. Amen.