

**Homily for the 100th Birthday of Marian Jacobs
The Moorings Retirement Community
Arlington Heights, Illinois**

March 10, 2018

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Bishop of Springfield in Illinois**

Sto lat! Those are the words of the Polish birthday song that we people of Polish ancestry have been singing for years. They mean, “May she live one hundred years!” Somehow that no longer seems an appropriate song to sing as my Aunt Marian Jacobs celebrates her 100th birthday! Nor do I think she would want us to sing, “May you live two hundred years!” So it is probably best just to sing happy birthday at lunch today and leave the number of years up to God.

It is fitting that we gather to celebrate the Holy Eucharist today before Aunt Marian’s birthday luncheon, since the word “Eucharist” comes from the Greek word *eukharistia*, meaning “to give thanks.” Indeed, we give thanks to God for one hundred years of blessings bestowed on Aunt Marian over the past century. After the gift of life itself, the gift of love and the gift of faith, one of the greatest gifts for which to give thanks is the gift of family. We give thanks to God for Aunt Marian’s parents, siblings

(including, of course, my father, John H. Paprocki, Jr.), her husband Bruno, her children, grandchildren, great-grandchildren, nieces and nephews.

Personally, I am grateful not only because Aunt Marian is my father's sister, but also because she is my Godmother. Pope Francis has called on Catholics to remember not only their day of birth, but their day of baptism as well. I was baptized on August 24, 1952, the feast day of Saint Bartholomew. As I said, Aunt Marian was my Godmother, while my Godfather was my mother's brother, Uncle Eugene Bonat.

Godparents have a very important role to play in the life of the baptized. The technical word for Godparent used in the Rite of Baptism and in canon law is "sponsor." The role of a sponsor in the case of infant baptism is to "to present an infant at the baptism, together with the parents, and who will help the baptized to lead a Christian life in harmony with baptism, and to fulfill faithfully the obligations connected with it."¹ While the parents are the primary teachers of the faith, sponsors help support the parents and the baptized to fulfill their Christian duties. This help and support may come in various forms, but it is seen as an essential role for introducing the newly baptized to the Christian way of life.

Among the qualifications to serve as a sponsor at baptism, the sponsor must be a “Catholic who has been confirmed and has already received the sacrament of the Most Holy Eucharist and leads a life in harmony with the faith and the role to be undertaken.”² Aunt Marian’s family members and friends along with me can certainly attest that she has led a life in harmony with the Catholic faith. From my perspective, I can certainly say that I am grateful for whatever my Aunt Marian did as my Godmother through prayer and example to help me become a priest and a bishop!

Our readings today speak of living waters. As God gave Moses water for the people to drink and Jesus gave the Samaritan women living water, so our Lord gives us the cleansing water of baptism so that we might have eternal life. These waters of baptism open up for us the flowing graces of the other sacraments. As we eat the Body and drink the Blood of Our Lord, in this Eucharist, He promises that we will never be hungry or thirsty again.

May God give us this grace. Amen.

¹ *Code of Canon Law*, canon 872.

² *Code of Canon Law*, canon 874, §1.