

**Homily for the Mass Honoring the 140th Anniversary of the
Arrival of the Hospital Sisters of Saint Francis in Highland**

January 26, 2018

**Saint Joseph's Hospital
Highland, Illinois**

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

Reverend Fathers, Hospital Sisters of Saint Francis, President Ludwig, members of the Board of Directors, doctors, nurses, and staff of Saint Joseph's Hospital, my dear brothers and sisters in Christ: it is good for us to be here today as we give praise and thanks to God for the many blessings He has bestowed on Saint Joseph's Hospital here in Highland. As we look back at the years that have passed since the Hospital Sisters of Saint Francis arrived here in Highland 140 years ago, we remember the many dedicated souls who have labored so diligently out of love for Christ in caring for the sick among us. On behalf of my predecessors and in my own name as diocesan bishop, I extend my grateful appreciation to the Hospital Sisters of Saint Francis and all those who have contributed to the apostolic work of Catholic health care here in Highland over the past 140 years.

You know your own roots well, how 140 years ago two Hospital Sisters of St. Francis came to Highland at the request of Father Joseph Meckel. In those early days the Sisters relied on the generous cooperation of the parishioners and community to tend to the needs of the sick and to provide adequate care for them.

If we take a moment to reflect on these humble beginnings in which the Sisters begged for basic necessities and lived in the same building in which they tended the sick, it should be easy for us to see the connection to the parable in our Gospel today. Just a few moments ago, we heard our Lord compare the Kingdom of God to a mustard seed. While the mustard seed is the smallest of seeds, once planted it grows to become a very large plant. The ministry of the Hospital Sisters of Saint Francis here in Highland is much like this. Since the first 12-bed hospital was built in 1879, the care of the sick by the Hospital Sisters of St. Francis has grown into the beautiful 25-bed hospital in which we gather today.

As you know, we recently completed our Fourth Diocesan Synod, in which we declared that “the mission of the Roman Catholic Diocese of Springfield in Illinois is to build a fervent community of intentional and dedicated missionary disciples of the Risen Lord and steadfast stewards of

God's creation who seek to become saints. Accordingly, the community of Catholic faithful in this diocese is committed to the discipleship and stewardship way of life as commanded by Christ Our Savior and as revealed by Sacred Scripture and Tradition. To further this mission, the Diocese of Springfield in Illinois is committed to implementing the Four Pillars of Discipleship and Stewardship, namely: hospitality, prayer, formation and service.

From my perspective, Catholic healthcare has a vital role to play in fulfilling this mission and in implementing these four pillars of discipleship and stewardship. Certainly our Catholic hospitals are centers of hospitality, as the words "hospital" and "hospitality" both come from the same Latin word, *hospes*, which, depending on its context, could mean either "host" or "guest." Indeed, Catholic hospitals host many guests in the hope of making them well by treating the whole person, body and soul, mind and heart.

Catholic hospitals obviously also must be places of prayer, not just in terms of the liturgical prayers and sacramental services provided by chaplains and those who work in pastoral care, but hopefully also places where doctors, nurses, management, support staff, patients and their

families feel comfortable invoking divine assistance in the ministry of healing.

Catholic hospitals must also be places of formation in the Catholic principles of health care. We cannot assume, for example, that new employees and health care practitioners will be familiar with the *Ethical and Religious Directives for Catholic Health Care Services*, but concerted and ongoing efforts must be made to ensure that these *Ethical and Religious Directives* are well-known and faithfully put into practice.

Finally, Catholic hospitals must be places of dedicated service, where patients feel confident that they will receive first-rate services capable of bringing them the healing of body and soul, mind and heart that they seek.

My dear brothers and sisters in Christ, I pray that the growth experienced over these past 140 years will inspire and motivate you to strive ever more earnestly to continue to build up the kingdom of God here on earth through your ministry to the sick. May you always seek to bear witness to the truth of the Gospel through your actions and your words, and so reflect the love of Christ, the Divine Physician, to those you serve.

May God give us this grace. Amen.