

**Homily for the Annual Convention of the
Springfield Diocesan Council of Catholic Women**

September 26, 2018

**Saints Mary and Joseph Parish
Carlinville, Illinois**

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Bishop of Springfield in Illinois**

Reverend Fathers, deacons, esteemed members of the Diocesan Council of Catholic Women, my dear sisters and brothers in Christ, it is good for us to be here as we celebrate this 90th Annual Convention of the Springfield Diocesan Council of Catholic Women.

Since 1928, Catholic women from throughout the Diocese of Springfield in Illinois have come together each year to grow as Catholic women and disciples of Jesus Christ. We come, therefore, to this celebration of the Eucharist with a profound sense of gratitude for the gifts that our Lord has bestowed on the Diocesan Council of Catholic Women as we ask God's continued guidance, so that all of you might continue to be committed disciples of our Lord and good stewards of His abundant gifts.

On an anniversary such as this, it is natural to wonder what life was like ninety years ago. Looking at our circumstances today in the year 2018, the differences in our country and world, as well as our way of life, seem vast. In 1928, English bacteriologist Frederick Griffith reported the results of Griffith's experiment, indirectly proving the existence of DNA; British inventor John Logie Baird broadcasted a transatlantic television signal from London to Hartsdale, New York; aviator Amelia Earhart became the first woman to make a successful transatlantic flight; the Governor of New York, Al Smith, became the first Catholic nominated by a major political party for President of the United States; Sir Alexander Fleming noticed a bacteria-killing mold growing in his laboratory, discovering what later became known as penicillin; Saint Josemaría Escrivá, founded Opus Dei; Herbert Hoover won the presidential election by a wide margin over Al Smith to become the 31st president of the United States; and here in the Diocese of Springfield in Illinois, the Cathedral of the Immaculate Conception was dedicated and the Diocesan Council of Catholic Women held their first convention.

As we look back on the humble beginnings of this organization and the lives of the people who have been part of its history over the past ninety years, we have a unique opportunity to reflect on what it means to be missionary disciples of our Lord.

Quite appropriately, our Gospel reading today focuses on that very topic. In fact, it is quite clear in today's Gospel that Jesus did not intend to carry out His mission alone. Rather, from the very beginning, His ministry was to be collaborative. To this end, we see our Lord sending the disciples out to proclaim the word of God and to heal the sick.

My dear sisters in Christ, just as He sent the Twelve, our Lord sends us out to proclaim the Good News in our daily lives. While this may seem like a daunting task, our Lord gives us a "roadmap," if you will, or a set of directions on how to do this. I would like to call your attention to two points from our Gospel today that may shed some light on how we are to go about proclaiming the Good News in the midst of the world today.

First, our Lord tells the disciples to take nothing for the journey. There is a certain urgency to the work of discipleship, so baggage must be kept to a minimum. In a literal sense, our Lord told the Twelve to take no food, no sack, and no money. Rather, they were to take only the tunic they were

wearing. This does not mean that the disciples were to be destitute, instead, they were to rely on the hospitality of those to whom they were ministering. While we are not sent out under the same circumstances that the Twelve were, we are still called to discard the “extra baggage” of sin from our lives so that we might be models of Christ’s love to those around us and build-up the kingdom of God here on earth.

The second point from today’s Gospel reading to which I would like to call your attention is the fact that the disciples are instructed to stay put. In fact, Our Lord tells them to enter a house randomly and stay there until it is time to leave. This might seem like an unusual instruction, but what our Lord was conveying to the Twelve is that they were not to shop around for the best accommodations or the most agreeable people. Rather, they were to accept whatever was available to them.

On the other hand, if they were not welcomed, they were to “shake the dust from [their] feet in testimony against them.” In other words, Jesus knew that not everyone would receive the message of the Gospel warmly and eagerly, so He was telling them to treat such people as foreigners. Because of the requirement to shake off foreign dust before entering the Temple, they were to enter the house of each Christian as if it were the Temple of God.

Most of us today are not entering strangers' homes and imposing on their hospitality in an attempt to build up the Church. In fact, if you were to try this, most people would probably react negatively. However, our Lord calls each of us to accept the many gifts that we have been given and use them for the sanctification of the world.

My dear members of the Springfield Diocesan Council of Catholic Women, following the dedicated example of your members for the past ninety years, may you carry on the good work of those who have gone before us, staying the course towards your centennial and beyond, by committing yourselves to our Lord as true missionary disciples of Jesus Christ.

May God Give us this grace. Amen.