

**Homily for Annual All Schools Mass in Quincy
Quincy Notre Dame High School**

September 25, 2018

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

Reverend Fathers, faculty, staff, students, beloved brothers and sisters in Christ: it is good that we are here to celebrate this All Schools Mass for the city of Quincy in conjunction with the start of the new academic year. It is most fitting that we come to the altar to ask our Lord's blessings upon your studies in the coming year.

As we pray for the guidance of the Holy Spirit in your quest for wisdom and knowledge, it is fitting to tell a story about the world-renowned physicist, Albert Einstein, who was once traveling from Princeton on a train when the conductor came down the aisle, punching the tickets of every passenger. When he came to Einstein and asked for his ticket, Einstein reached in his vest pocket. He couldn't find his ticket, so he reached in his trouser pockets. It wasn't there. He looked in his briefcase but couldn't find it. Then he looked in the seat beside him. He still couldn't find it.

The conductor said, "Dr. Einstein, I know who you are. I'm sure you bought a ticket. Don't worry about it." Einstein nodded appreciatively. The

conductor continued down the aisle punching tickets. As he was ready to move to the next car, he turned around and saw the great physicist down on his hands and knees looking under his seat for his ticket.

The conductor rushed back and said, "Dr. Einstein, Dr. Einstein, don't worry, I know who you are; no problem. You don't need a ticket. I'm sure you bought one." Einstein looked at him and said, "Young man, I too, know who I am. What I don't know is where I'm going."¹

Perhaps you can relate to Einstein metaphorically, in that you cannot find your ticket and you have no idea where you are going in life. Or perhaps you could take this story one step further: perhaps you are not even sure who you are in relation to others and to the world.

Knowing who we are and where we are going is integrally linked to one of our deepest needs: the need to belong. We need to know where we belong, that is, we need somewhere where we feel accepted, included, wanted; somewhere where we fit in; somewhere where we know we are not alone. The need to belong is so much more than just a part of Abraham Maslow's well-known *Hierarchy of Needs*, it is at the core of who we are as human beings.

In fact, people often go to great lengths in order to belong: joining various organizations, participating in team sports, being involved in book clubs and other groups that focus on common interests. While all of these are good things, at times we seem to forget that it is not so much about where we belong; the most important thing is to whom we belong, and that is our Lord. If we take this to heart and allow it to shape who we are as Christian disciples, we must ask ourselves, if we belong to Christ and He loves us more than we can even begin to comprehend, then how do we share that with others whom we encounter in our lives?

Just a few moments ago, in the first reading for today's Mass, we heard Saint Paul directing the early Christian community on how they should reflect the love of Christ to those around them. He instructed them to:

Put on then, as God's chosen ones, holy and beloved, heartfelt compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness, and patience, bearing with one another and forgiving one another, if one has a grievance against another; as the Lord has forgiven you, so must you also do. And over all these put on love, that is, the bond of perfection. (Colossians 3:12-14)

My dear brothers and sisters in Christ, these words are as timely for us to hear today as they were for the early Christian community. If we take to

heart these words and use them as a framework for how we can reflect the love of Christ to those around us, we will be well on our way to becoming saints.

In the coming school year, I invite you to be more kind, patient and forgiving with your fellow students, your friends, and your families each and every day. While this might seem like a simple task, I think that you will find it more challenging than you would imagine. But, if you strive to be more virtuous and treat those around you as your brothers and sisters in Christ, you are certain, as Saint Paul instructs us, to put on love. If you are more kind, patient and forgiving, you will most surely share the love of Christ with those around you.

As we prepare to receive our Lord in Holy Communion, let us ask for His blessings on the learning that will take place this year, both in academic settings as well as in our learning to follow Him more closely as His disciples. May we all grow in wisdom and grace in this new academic year.

May God Give us this grace. Amen.

¹ http://www.stltoday.com/suburban-journals/illinois/patti-amsden-rev-billy-graham-s-new-suit/article_0ee93adf-8ecb-5d7b-9997-3eaca972c842.html