

## **Homily for the Police Officers Memorial Service**

**May 3, 2018**

**The Cathedral of the Immaculate Conception  
Springfield, Illinois**

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Bishop of Springfield in Illinois**

My dear brothers and sisters in Christ, Albert Einstein 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, 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.”<sup>1</sup>

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. Our first reading today addresses that very subject, for just a few moments ago we heard Saint Paul telling the Christian community in Rome that, *no one lives for oneself, and no one dies for oneself. For if we live, we live for the Lord, and if we die, we die for the Lord; so then, whether we live or die, we are the Lord's.*<sup>2</sup>

My dear brothers and sisters in Christ, just as Saint Paul reminded the early Christian community that they belong to Christ in this life as well as in death, so too, should we be reminded of that today, as we gather to remember those members of the law enforcement community who are no longer with us in this life. For, through their living and dying in the service of others, they modeled what it means to be Christ's disciples during their time with us. So now, we entrust them to God's mercy and kindness, along with the hope that, together with all who have died in Christ, our Lord will take them to Himself and one day we shall greet them once again, when the love of Christ, which conquers all things, destroys even death itself.

Dear members of the law enforcement community, like those who have gone before you, may you look to our Lord for hope. Whether that is the hope to carry on in the face of sorrow or grief at the loss of someone to whom you were close or whether that is the hope that, through your giving

of yourselves in service to your communities, a more peaceful and just society might come about. Our Lord is always faithful and wants to give you the strength to be witness of His love to those you serve.

I have the tradition of singing as a part of my homilies for the Mass in which I confer the Sacrament of Confirmation on the young people of our diocese and over the years I have used a number of Linkin Park songs because I thought they effectively captured and expressed the pain experienced by so many people, especially teenagers and young adults. While you are neither teenagers nor are you here to receive the Sacrament of Confirmation, I think that the song that I have chosen this year for my Confirmation homilies is equally appropriate to this occasion. The title of the song is "Somewhere I Belong" and the refrain goes like this:

**Somewhere I Belong - Linkin Park**

*I wanna heal, I wanna feel, what I thought was never real*

*I wanna let go of the pain I've felt so long.*

*I wanna heal, I wanna feel, like I'm close to something real.*

*I wanna find something I've wanted all along*

*Somewhere I belong.*

I am telling you this story today and singing this song because we all want to be healed of our pains and find that somewhere we belong. As you reflect on the words of Saint Paul and strive to always live for the Lord so as to one day die in God's grace, know that our Lord invites you to enter into a personal relationship with Him. He will heal you of all your pains and welcome you to a place where you definitely belong, if you put your faith and trust in Him and make yourself part of His loving community, the Church.

May God give us this grace. Amen.

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<sup>1</sup> [http://www.stltoday.com/suburban-journals/illinois/patti-amsden-rev-billy-graham-s-new-suit/article\\_0ee93adf-8ecb-5d7b-9997-3eaca972c842.html](http://www.stltoday.com/suburban-journals/illinois/patti-amsden-rev-billy-graham-s-new-suit/article_0ee93adf-8ecb-5d7b-9997-3eaca972c842.html)

<sup>2</sup> Romans 14:7-8