

**Homily for the Respect Life Mass
for the Curia of the Diocese of
Springfield in Illinois**

**Saint Viator Chapel
Catholic Pastoral Center
Springfield, Illinois**

October 24, 2018

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Bishop of Springfield in Illinois**

My dear brothers and sisters in Christ, it is good that we are here to celebrate this annual Respect Life Mass for our Diocesan Curia. As we gather together as people who have been called to serve the Church in a particular way, let us reflect on the responsibility entrusted to us of building up the kingdom of God in the midst of the world today.

For the past few years now we have been talking about stewardship and discipleship in our diocese. The very first declaration of the Synodal Declarations from our Fourth Diocesan Synod says 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.”

Both of our readings today speak of stewardship. When we speak of being “stewards of God’s creation,” we tend to think of being caretakers of God’s material creation, that is, the physical earth and temporal goods. But Saint Paul uses the term “stewardship” in a very different sense when he wrote in his Letter to the Ephesians about the “stewardship of God’s grace.” Saint Paul reminds us that stewardship extends to the spiritual gifts of God’s creation as well as to the physical and material gifts of God’s creation. This awareness that we are stewards of spiritual goods and well as material goods helps to make the essential connection between stewardship and discipleship more apparent.

In the opening lines of today’s passage from the Gospel according to Saint Luke, Jesus reminds His disciples that they must be prepared like the master of house, for the Son of Man will come at an hour that we do not expect. Our Lord’s reference to the “master of the house” is another way of referring to the “steward of the house.” A steward is a person in charge of the master’s prize possessions: the house, the fellow workers, the business, and even the money. In a word: everything! None of it is owned by the steward, of course, but he or she is in charge of it to help the master accomplish his will.

While our proper stewardship of God's material creation is important to carrying out our spiritual mission, Saint Paul reminds us that ultimately we who are involved in ministry are stewards of something far more important than buildings or money: as stewards of God's grace we are given the important responsibility of being instruments of sanctification for God's people on their journey of faith and helping them to become saints through God's grace.

As the Gospel passage for today ends, we hear our Lord instructing His disciples that *Much will be required of the person entrusted with much, and still more will be demanded of the person entrusted with more.*¹ As members of the Diocesan Curia, each of us has been entrusted with much responsibility for the people of God and we all play an important role in the life of our diocese. Saint Josemaría Escrivá provides an image of ripples of water in describing the importance of the Christian vocation in his book called *The Way*. He writes,

You are the stone fallen into the lake. With your word and example produce a first ripple... and it will produce another... and then another, and another... each time wider. Now do you understand the importance of your mission?²

In our work here as members of the Curia we must live each day in a manner that seeks to spread the Good News of the Gospel and so build up the Church in the midst of the world today. Much responsibility has been entrusted to us and, therefore, much is expected of us.

Therefore, as we approach our Eucharistic Lord in Holy Communion, let us ask Him for the grace to take the many gifts that we have been given and use them in a manner that impacts the lives of those around us. In this way, when Our Lord calls us to Himself at the end of our earthly lives, may we be ready to give an account as to how we were good stewards of His graces.

May God give us this grace. Amen.

¹ Luke 12:48.

² Saint Josemaría Escrivá, *The Way*, 831