

**Homily Outline for the Mass for the Bishops' Plan Insurance Company
Monday of the 21st Week of Ordinary Time - Year I
August 26, 2019**

**St Matthew Church
1005 E Schaumburg Road
Schaumburg, Illinois**

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Bishop of Springfield in Illinois**

- I. How many of you want to be saints?
 - A. If you are not sure what that means, maybe better to ask:
How many of you want to go to heaven when you die?
 - B. Anyone who goes to heaven is a saint!
 - C. The alternative is not very pleasant even to think about it, especially since it will last forever.

- II. Being a saint is not so far off or impossible as we might think.
 - A. This past summer, I met the daughter of a canonized saint: Dr. Gianna Emanuela Molla, the daughter of St Gianna Beretta Molla, who was a physician, a working mom, a professional woman, and a loving wife.
 1. In 1961, Gianna became pregnant with her fourth child. Toward the end of her second month of pregnancy, Gianna began experiencing severe pain. Her doctors discovered she had developed a fibroma in her uterus, meaning she was carrying both a baby and a tumor.
 2. Ruling out abortion as a way to save her own life, Gianna was quite clear about her wishes, expressing to her family, "If you must decide between me and the child, do not hesitate: choose the child. I insist on it. Save the baby."

3. On April 21, 1962, her daughter, Gianna Emanuela Molla, was successfully delivered by Caesarean section. The doctors tried many different treatments and procedures to ensure both lives would be saved. However, on April 28, 1962, a week after the baby was born, Gianna passed away from a severe infection. Gianna was beatified by Pope John Paul II on April 24, 1994, and officially canonized as a saint on May 16, 2004. Her husband and their children, including Gianna Emanuela, attended her canonization ceremony, making this the first time a husband witnessed his wife's canonization.

4. I rode from the airport in Sacramento to Napa in a van with Dr. Gianna Emanuela Molla, the daughter of St. Gianna Beretta Molla. It was very touching to hear her talk about how she prayed every morning to her "Saint Mom."

B. I thought of my own mother, who was a saintly person, even if not officially canonized a saint.

C. In my lifetime I have actually met two canonized saints: Pope St. John Paul II and St. Theresa of Calcutta. Meeting the daughter of a canonized saint also brought home to me very clearly that becoming a saint is not as impossible to achieve as we may think.

D. Even if we are never officially canonized as a saint by the Pope, we can still become saints in fact, thanks to God's grace which leads us to eternal life in heaven.

E. I pray that St. Gianna Beretta Molla will intercede for all of us to become saints!

III. Saint John Paul II, in his Apostolic Letter, *Novo Millennio Ineunte*, "On entering the New Millennium," (nos. 30-31), said, "First of all, I have no hesitation in saying that all pastoral initiatives must be set in relation to holiness."

- A. Everything we do in the Church, including fundraising, building and maintaining facilities, programs, schools, etc., should be related to how we promote the holiness of our faithful.
 - B. We should also keep in mind that our work with BPIC has its ultimate purpose in helping our members to advance the holiness of their faithful, i.e., help them get to heaven.
- IV. In today's Gospel (Mt 23:13-22), Jesus calls the scribes and Pharisees "hypocrites, saying, "You lock the Kingdom of heaven before men. You do not enter yourselves, nor do you allow entrance to those trying to enter."
- A. Last January, when the U.S. bishops met for a retreat at Mundelein Seminary, our retreat master (Capuchin Franciscan Raniero Cantalamessa, the preacher to the papal household since 1980), reminded the bishops: "If someone were to observe the law perfectly but did not have the interior disposition of heart that comes from love, he wouldn't, in fact, be observing the law, but pretending to observe it. It would be mere legalism, like that of many Pharisees."
 - B. Jesus was not saying it was all right to disregard the Ten Commandments, but was saying our observance of God's law should be based on our love of God and neighbor, not just the performance of external actions.
 - C. This is the way that leads to heaven!

May God give us this grace. Amen.