

**Homily Outline for Mass for Students and Staff at the  
Center for Spirituality and Sustainability at  
Southern Illinois University Edwardsville (SIUE).  
April 28, 2019**

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- I. Burning of Notre Dame Cathedral in Paris two weeks ago has been very much on my mind.
  - A. Many people who have never been to Paris are familiar with Notre Dame Cathedral thanks to Bishop Robert Barron's *Catholicism* series.
  - B. Thirty years ago then-Father Robert Barron gave me a personal tour of Notre Dame Cathedral, so it is heartbreaking to see the damage done by the fire.
  - C. I am confident that Notre Dame Cathedral will be rebuilt.
    1. Experience of growing up in Chicago with a keen awareness of how the city was rebuilt from the ashes of the great Chicago Fire of 1871.
    2. Almost a billion dollars have already been pledged for the rebuilding of Notre Dame Cathedral.
    3. Protestors (9,000 "Yellowjackets") in Paris complained that this money should be used for the working class.
      - a. Apparently the spirit of the French Revolution has not yet been extinguished!
      - b. The influence of secularism is strong in France and throughout Europe.
    4. There are 67,000,000 people in France; if the \$1 billion were divided among them, that would come to \$15 per person;
    5. If we reduced that number to focus on the working class, let's say 50,000,000 people, that comes to \$20 per person; not significant enough to make much impact!
  - D. Silver lining is that rebuilding Notre Dame Cathedral may help rebuild the community of faith in France.
- II. Mindful of St. Francis of Assisi's experience at the church of San Damiano.
  - A. He heard the Lord's message to "rebuild my Church," not just the physical structure, but the community of the Church as well.
  - B. In light of recent scandals and shocking revelations of the sins of priests and the hierarchy, we are called not just to rebuild Notre Dame Cathedral, but the community of faith in Paris, throughout France, in the United States and across the world.

### III. Blueprint for rebuilding the Church can be seen in the Scriptures for Holy Week

A. The reading of the Lord's Passion from the Gospel of St. Luke starts with the narrative of the Last Supper.

1. Jesus says one of His apostles will betray Him; another will deny Him.
2. St. Luke tells us that an argument about who was the greatest broke out among them while they were eating. This was during the first concelebrated Mass with Jesus the High Priest and his hand-picked bishops!
3. After the Last Supper was finished, Jesus took them out to pray with Him, but they fell asleep!
4. The Gospel readings for Monday, Tuesday and Wednesday of Holy Week are all about Judas: his plotting to betray Jesus; bargaining with the high priests for a sum of money for his betrayal; and objecting to spending money on perfumed oil for Jesus' feet, not because he was concerned for the poor, but because he was a thief (and this was Jesus' hand-picked treasurer).

B. What do we learn from all this?

1. Judas recognizes his sin, but does not believe he can be forgiven, so he kills himself.
2. Peter recognizes his sin, and weeps bitterly.
3. My brothers and sisters in Christ, when we see our sins we should weep bitterly and not fall into some kind of rationalization or complacency about them. We should weep bitterly that we will never commit those sins again. And that is the real story of this Holy Week. Because those weak, sinful, frail men on whom Jesus would build His church, at the beginning of all this, that passion narrative, are so seemingly unsuited for the task. By the time Jesus rises from the dead, they are completely different; they are completely changed, and they are alive and on fire with the spirit and they go out and change the world by proclaiming the good news of Jesus Christ.

### IV. In the Scriptures for this second Sunday of Easter – Divine Mercy Sunday – we see the apostles gathered in the Upper Room, cowering in fear.

A. Jesus appears and puts them at ease, wishing them peace.

B. The He sends the Holy Spirit.

1. The Synoptic Gospels (Matthew, Mark and Luke) describe the sending of the Holy Spirit as coming fifty days after the resurrection.
2. St. John's Gospel condenses these events in what is described as the "Johannine Pentecost," since he is the only evangelist who describes it this way.
3. With the grace of the Holy Spirit, the apostles are on fire with preaching the Word of God.
4. Even St. Thomas overcomes his doubts and puts his faith in Christ without actually touching Our Lord's wounds.

5. May we our hearts also be on fire to overcome our doubts and fears to be true missionary disciples of Our Risen Lord!

V. May God give us this grace. Amen.