

**Homily for Mass and Commissioning of  
*Totus Tuus* Teams for 2019**

**Memorial of the Immaculate Heart of Mary  
June 7, 2019**

**Villa Maria Catholic Life Center  
Springfield, Illinois**

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

My dear brothers and sisters in Christ, it is good for us to be here this morning as you near the conclusion of your training in preparation for the *Totus Tuus* program to be held this summer in the Diocese of Springfield in Illinois. I am grateful for your willingness to give your time and energy to this important work of bringing the Good News of the Gospel to the many young people of the parishes to which you will go.

Today's first reading confirms what Jesus had predicted: rejection by the Jews (Lk 10:10), coming persecutions (Lk 21:12), and preaching to the nations (Lk 24:27). The journey of the Church through the centuries has been foreshadowed in Acts of the Apostles. Would-be disciples of Jesus are told that the followers of the Christ will have to suffer, and perhaps even be persecuted for their relationship with Jesus. In reading these texts, there is

no mistaking the fact that it is impossible to be a Christian without embracing the cross.

Both Peter and Paul experienced persecution, imprisonment, and execution despite their wholehearted dedication to Christ and the Gospel, not to mention that fact that the litany of saints testifies to the reality that the path of following Christ is beset with challenges, danger, and sometimes the ultimate sacrifice, that of one's life.

Over the course of this summer you will undoubtedly encounter many challenges. Know that while these challenges may test your knowledge, your patience or perhaps even your commitment to serve as a missionary in the *Totus Tuus* program, they are opportunities for you to grow in your relationship with our Lord.

You have probably heard the story told about how St. Teresa of Avila was once knocked off her donkey and fell into the mud, injuring her leg. "Lord," she said, "you couldn't have picked a worse time for this to happen. Why would you let this happen?" And the response in prayer that she heard was, "That is how I treat my friends." To which the saintly sister reportedly replied, "Lord, if this is the way you treat your friends, it is not surprising you have so few!"

My dear young people, the past seven weeks of the Easter season should serve as a reminder that no matter what trials you may face this summer and throughout your lives, eternal life awaits those who are dedicated to following the risen Lord. For the suffering of this life pales in comparison to the joy of heaven. This conviction has from the beginning of the Church sustained Christians in the face of trials and troubles, and if you let it, it will sustain you as you go out as missionary disciples of our Lord as you go out to proclaim the good news of the Risen Christ.

Once again, I would like to thank all of you for your generosity in committing yourselves to be of service to the young people of our diocese and in assisting me in my responsibility of shepherding the flock entrusted to my care. The work may be challenging at times and you may not initially see the fruits of your labors, but you can be assured that if you remain close to the Lord and faithful to the work that you are being asked to do, the Lord will do great things through you in the lives of many. May you continually seek the intercession of our Blessed Mother, under whose patronage this program has been entrusted, asking for her motherly care to assist you and all of those you will serve in drawing closer to her Son.

May God give us this grace. Amen.