

Homily for the Curia Employee Recognition Mass

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

**Wednesday of Fifth Week of Easter
May 22, 2019**

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

Reverend Fathers, Deacon, my dear brothers and sisters in Christ: it is good that we are here for our annual Curial Employee Recognition Mass during which we give thanks to God for the blessing that each of you are in your various forms of service to the mission of this local Church. Your day-to-day efforts provide the necessary resources to assist the parishes, schools, and faithful of our diocese in their journey of discipleship with the Lord.

In our first reading, we have this difference of opinion emerge with Paul and Barnabas on one side, and some Pharisees on the other. These Pharisees are not bad men. In fact, we are told that they are recent converts who had become believers in Jesus Christ. However, these early Christians were still trying to figure out how Christianity fits with their practices of the Old Testament. These Pharisees thought it was necessary to continue practicing every jot and tittle of the Mosaic Law. Paul and Barnabas were

insisting that it was not the observance of the Law of Moses that brought salvation, but a living relationship with Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior. Of course, this question was resolved in adopting the position of Paul and Barnabas at the Council of Jerusalem.

In the Gospel for today's Mass, Jesus uses the image of the vine and the branches to explain the relationship that we have with Him. He explains that our being able to bear good fruit is dependent on our being united with Him as He reminds us: *without me you can do nothing*.¹ We have been experiencing many good fruits in our diocese and here at our pastoral center, none of which would be possible if our efforts, both large and small, were not rooted in holiness, so I am confident that we are indeed moving in the right direction.

As our diocese continues to move forward with implementing the goals of our Fourth Diocesan Synod through developing a way of life focused on stewardship and discipleship, we do so knowing that we already have a firm foundation upon which to build. I am convinced that your efforts to root your lives in holiness personally and in your work here has contributed significantly to the positive growth throughout our diocese. I would just like to reiterate the importance of keeping our attention fixed on

this awareness, that our commitment to finding holiness in our daily work is serving to strengthen the culture of growth in discipleship in our diocese.

My dear brothers and sisters in Christ, the life of union with our Lord extends beyond our personal lives and can be seen in our way of working, in our dealings with others, in our care for our family, in every aspect of our lives. To this point, Saint Josemaría Escrivá writes in his book of homilies called *Friends of God* that “the apostolate, of whatever kind it be, must be an overflow of the interior life.”² In other words, we cannot hope to make an difference in the world unless we first start with conversion of our own hearts.

In the end, it is also helpful for us to be reminded that our holiness and that of others is always pointing us toward Heaven. The goal toward which all of our efforts are directed is the salvation of souls. This has always been the focus of the Church, even from her earliest days.

Embracing a life of holiness through stewardship and discipleship is not just about having better programs and more people in our pews. All of the benefits that make this way of life attractive are all secondary to the one benefit that really matters, being with God and one another in Heaven.

Once again, I want to thank you for your faithful collaboration with me in this important work. I hope you join with me in seeing what a privilege we have in being so closely involved in bringing about this reality of inviting all in our diocese to greater holiness, leading to that ultimate goal of our salvation. May our reception of the Holy Eucharist strengthen us to continue the good work that has begun in us as we look forward to its completion in the glory of Heaven.

May God give us this grace. Amen.

¹ John 15:5

² Saint Josemaría Escrivá, *Friends of God*, 254.