

**HOMILY OUTLINE FOR THE MASS OF CHRISTIAN BURIAL FOR
FATHER JOHN CARBERRY**

January 25, 2020

**The Cathedral of the Immaculate Conception
Springfield, Illinois**

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

I. Rev. John P. Carberry

- A. Condolences to his 26 nieces and nephews, brother priests, and former parishioners. His uncle was Cardinal John Carberry, who served as Archbishop of St. Louis from 1968 to 1979. Bishop McNicholas arranged for Cardinal Carberry to ordain his nephew John to the diaconate.
- B. Born: May 15, 1927. He graduated from Cathedral Boys High School in 1945 and served in the United States Navy during World War II. He worked for many years at Our Saviour Hospital in Jacksonville, IL.
- C. Ordained: May 30, 1981, in a class of seven, including Bishop Kevin Vann; at the age of 54; . Assistant: St. Patrick, Decatur, and Assistant Chaplain, Millikin University, 1981-1986. Pastor: Holy Trinity, Stonington, and St. Stanislaus, Macon, 1986-1989; St. Boniface, Quincy, 1989-2002. Parochial Administrator: St. Boniface, Quincy, 2002-2006. Retired: 2006-present.
- D. His spiritual formation evaluation in 1978 for his first year at Sacred Heart School of Theology in Hales Corners, Wisconsin, included the following observations about John Carberry:
 - 1. "He is observed as being a man of deep faith and one very much in love with the Church. He seems very responsive to the actions of the Lord in his life."

2. In his own self-evaluation he stated: "I feel that I have taken advantage of the opportunities offered me here to deepen my personal faith and spiritual life through the Eucharistic Liturgy, the Liturgy of the Hours, the availability of Chapel for reflection and meditation ... celebration of the Sacrament of Reconciliation and communal prayer life of the school."
 3. His evaluators backed up that statement, saying that "John is observed as always being present for the various spiritual programs of the seminary."
 4. John's peers in the seminary saw him in a very positive way. These are some of the statements made about him: "a good man; possesses such priestly virtue as meekness and humility; very generous, kind and considerate person; willing to help anyone; a very prayerful and thoughtful man."
 5. "John is an avid sports fan and likes all sports. As one person put it: 'he is a demon on the basketball floor.' His evaluators encouraged him to continue his interest in sports as a good outlet for his energy as well as recreation. He also enjoys music. The Sister who teaches music and singing wrote on her evaluation of him the following: 'John is a lovely man, kind, prayerful -- musical, cooperative in every way, but a bit too shy about his gifts.' However, his evaluators would like to point out that just last week John was one of the leaders of the week at the 'Liturgy of the Hours' and he confidently started the hymns."
 6. "At this time in John's preparation for the priesthood the Formation Department can truthfully say that he is a worthy candidate."
- E. At the end of John's first year in the seminary, the Rector wrote to Bishop McNicholas, "John has had a terrific first year and has adjusted very well to the seminary life. He is very quiet, but at the same time very deep."

- F. His 3rd year evaluation in 1980 said, "The faculty also mention areas of growth for John. Most frequently they mention that John is always late, and that he is very shy."
- G. In his final formation report in January 1981, the Rector wrote, "Overall, you have a fine man in John, in some respects a remarkable man. If he is encouraged to develop his strengths and helped not to become discouraged with his limitations, he will do much for his people as their priest."
- H. Additional information from Father Tom Donovan, Pastor of St. Anthony of Padua Parish, Quincy.
1. Fr. John Carberry was no stranger to the people of St. Anthony Parish, having spent some time in residence there during his retirement.
 2. He was the final Pastor of St Boniface Church (1989-2002).
 3. He is remembered for his deep, abiding devotion to the Blessed Virgin Mary, and in particular his leadership of the Legion of Mary.
 4. He was also a patron of the St. Patrick choir, often driving across the state at all hours of the day and night (which was his way) just to have dinner and visit with them.
 5. He spent his recent years at the Illinois Veteran's Home where he slowly lost his awareness to the present world, while living in total anticipation of the world to come. Many thanks to Fr. Zach Edgar and Fr. Don Blickhan for their devoted care of our brother priest.
 6. Fr. Carberry was instrumental in starting and maintaining the devotion to the "two hearts" First Friday-First Saturday devotions that once was at St Anthony, which is now moved over to St. Rose Church, and continues to bear fruit.

7. He had a very strong devotion to Blessed Virgin Mary and was a tireless advocate for the pro-life cause and loved his country. This can be seen in his request that memorial contributions be made to Legion of Mary, Springfield Right to Life, and the Illinois Veterans Home in Quincy.
8. Many of us on this side of the veil knew him as “the late” Fr. Carberry [because he was always late] ... may he now know the embrace of those who have been awaiting his arrival... just on time... certainly his own family, his parents and four sisters, his beloved Heavenly Mother, and most of all his Lord, whom he served as priest for nearly 40 years.

II. “He is very quiet, but at the same time very deep.”

A. I can relate to that, because similar things were said about me in the seminary.

B. Reflections from Cardinal Robert Sarah’s book, *The Power of Silence*.

1. In heaven, God’s love for us and our love for God will be expressed without words, just *The Word*, Jesus Christ.
2. We experience God’s love most profoundly in the silence of our hearts.

III. Since our goal is to become saints and live forever with God in heaven, it is good for us to reflect on the question: what will heaven be like?

1. The answer to that question is suggested in a movie I saw a few months ago entitled, “I Can Only Imagine.” The movie tells the story of Bart Millard and the Christian band known as MercyMe.
2. Bart’s father, Arthur, became a Christian late in life after he was diagnosed with cancer. After Arthur’s death, Bart discovered his Dad’s journal in which he wrote his reflections about heaven. On each page, Arthur wrote, “I can only imagine.”

3. This inspired Bart to write a song by that name. It became the best-selling Christian song of all time.

I can only imagine what it will be like
 When I walk by your side
 I can only imagine what my eyes will see
 When your face is before me
 I can only imagine

Surrounded by your glory, what will my heart feel
 Will I dance for you, Jesus, or in awe of you be still
 Will I stand in your presence or to my knees will I fall
 Will I sing Hallelujah, will I be able to speak at all
 I can only imagine, I can only imagine

I can only imagine when that day comes
 And I find myself standing in the sun
 I can only imagine when all I will do
 Is forever, forever worship you
 I can only imagine, yeah, I can only imagine

Surrounded by your glory, what will my heart feel
 Will I dance for you, Jesus, or in awe of you be still
 Will I stand in your presence or to my knees will I fall
 Will I sing Hallelujah, will I be able to speak at all
 I can only imagine, yes, I can only imagine¹

- IV. Since our goal is to become saints, just imagine how awesome it would be to live forever with God in heaven!

May God give us this grace. Amen.

¹ Songwriter: Bart Marshall Millard, © ESSENTIAL MUSIC PUBLISHING, For non-commercial use only.