

**Homily for the Installation of Father Jason Stone as Pastor of Our Lady of the Holy Spirit, Mt. Zion, and St. Isidore, Bethany**

**at Our Lady of the Holy Spirit Church, Mt. Zion.**

**July 20, 2020 - Memorial of St. Apollinaris**

**† 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 today for this Mass and Rite of Installation of Father Jason Stone as Pastor of Our Lady of the Holy Spirit, here in Mt. Zion, and St. Isidore, in Bethany.

Our first reading today is from the prophet Micah, calling the people of his own day back to fidelity to the Lord. In the centuries after David, the kingdom of Israel had been split between north and south and many had fallen into idolatry and injustice. Micah speaks words from God to the people: "O my people, what have I done to you? In what have I wearied you? Answer me! For I brought you up from the land of Egypt, and redeemed you from the house of bondage; and I sent before you Moses, Aaron, and Miriam."<sup>1</sup> It is a call to the Israelites to trust in God and turn their hearts back to Him.

Micah prophecies the terrible destruction that will come from Assyria and Babylon, and that this is a consequence of the infidelity and sin of the people, yet he also reminds them of the Lord's care in the past, and His promise

of care in the future. They, like us, **need not fear** the troubles of their own day because God's love has not wavered for them, even if they had fallen short of the love they should have given to God. What must the people do to receive His protection and promises again? Not "burnt offerings ... thousands of rams ... [or] ten thousands of rivers of oil," but rather "to do justice, and to love kindness, and to walk humbly with your God."<sup>2</sup>

As we gather today for this Mass, we mark the beginning of a new chapter in the life of Our Lady of the Holy Spirit Parish and St. Isidore Parish with the Installation of your new Pastor. It is a great joy for me that Father Jason Stone has accepted the call to serve as the local shepherd of the Catholic communities of faith here at Our Lady of the Holy Spirit and St. Isidore Parishes. Given his background as a civil lawyer, I am pleased that he has also agreed to serve as my Delegate for Legal Professionals and as Chaplain of the St. Thomas More Lawyers Guild of Springfield.

In many ways, like Moses and Aaron and Miriam and Micah, and all those that the Lord has called to lead and speak to His people throughout the centuries, Fr. Stone will be entrusted with the pastoral care of all of you as an *Alter Christus*, another Christ, shepherding your souls as in the name of God, and in collaboration with me, as your bishop, a servant of the Lord.

At the same time, I also wish to express my deep appreciation to Father Steven Arisman for his dedicated ministry as your Pastor for the past four years. Our prayers go with him in his new pastorate at St. Francis Solanus Parish in Quincy.

Father Jason Stone was ordained in 2015 and served as Parochial Vicar at parishes in Granite City, Madison, and Alton. From 2017 until this past June 30<sup>th</sup>, he served as Pastor of Ss. Peter and Paul Parish in Alton. Fr. Stone will now serve you as pastor as we continue forward into this Third Millennium of Christianity, so I think it is fitting to call to mind a theme suggested by our late Holy Father, the Great Pope Saint John Paul II, in his Apostolic Letter, *Novo Millennio Ineunte*, "On Entering the New Millennium," which I quote as follows (nos. 30-31): "First of all, I have no hesitation in saying that all pastoral initiatives must be set in relation to holiness."

We grow in holiness by following Jesus as His disciples. Closely related to the notion of discipleship is the concept of stewardship. In the First Letter of St. Peter, he writes of stewardship in these words: "As each one has received a gift, use it to serve one another as good stewards of God's varied grace."<sup>3</sup> Micah, as we already saw, put different words on this same truth: holiness is "to do justice ... love kindness ... and walk humbly with your God".

In the Fall of 2015, I published my second pastoral letter, entitled, *Ars Crescendi in Dei Gratia*, Latin for “The Art of Growing in God’s Grace.” In it, I wrote, “The art of growing in God’s grace is the key to growth in the Church. Building a culture of growth in the Church starts with inviting people to experience the love of Jesus Christ.” To live a life like Micah describe is precisely to become holy, and pass on the love of Jesus Christ.

In 2017 we concluded our Fourth Diocesan Synod, in which we focused on discipleship and stewardship. In addition to the clergy and consecrated religious who participated, delegates from each of our 129 parishes in this Diocese voted overwhelmingly to adopt a dozen declarations intended to set the direction and tone for the pastoral ministry of this local Church for at least the next ten years.

The first of these declarations proclaims a new mission statement for all of us as members of this Diocese: “The mission of the Roman Catholic Diocese of Springfield in Illinois is to build a fervent community of intentional and dedicated missionary disciples of the Risen Lord and steadfast stewards of God’s creation who seek to become saints. Accordingly, the community of Catholic faithful in this diocese is committed to the discipleship and

stewardship way of life as commanded by Christ Our Savior and as revealed by Sacred Scripture and Tradition.”

To further this mission, the Diocese of Springfield in Illinois is committed to implementing the Four Pillars of Discipleship and Stewardship, namely, **hospitality, prayer, formation, and service**. In other words, we will **invite** people proactively to join us in prayer, especially Sunday Mass; we will **provide** well-prepared celebrations of the sacraments and other occasions for **prayer** as signs of hope and paths of grace to heaven; we will **study** the Bible and **learn** more about Jesus and our Catholic faith; and we will **serve** each other, especially those in need, by practicing charity and justice.

Through prayer, discernment, and consultation with others, it has become evident that the Lord is inviting us to embrace more fully our call to discipleship out of which necessarily follows a life of stewardship.<sup>4</sup>

Stewardship recognizes that everything we have comes from God. Stewardship from God’s perspective is that He has given us gifts to be used not just selfishly for ourselves, but to be shared with others. Becoming a disciple means making an intentional decision to accept the Lord’s call to follow Him and live the discipleship and stewardship way of life.

Thanks to the leadership of Father Arisman, your parishes have already begun to take steps to implement the goals of our Diocesan Synod. A key group that is essential to this plan for growth is the priests of our diocese, especially our pastors. But they cannot do this alone. They need the help and cooperation of all parishioners. To be able to put into practice the mission of Jesus, we need to be part of a team supporting each other.

I pray that all of you will work with Father Stone in seeking to be intentional disciples of the Lord and good stewards of the gifts entrusted to us for the growth of the Church as we journey together toward our inheritance in the glory of Heaven.

Therefore, dear parishioners of Our Lady of the Holy Spirit and St. Isidore Parishes, I urge you to strive for holiness, to work and pray with your new priest. Support him, help him, pray for him, and most of all, love him as he loves you and as Christ calls us to love each other.

May God give us this grace. Amen.

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<sup>1</sup> Micah 6:3-4.

<sup>2</sup> Micah 6:7, 8.

<sup>3</sup> 1 Peter 4:10.

<sup>4</sup> United States Conference of Catholic Bishops, *Stewardship: A Disciple's Response*, 1992, p. 8; <http://www.usccb.org/upload/stewardship-disciples-response-10th-anniversary.pdf>.