

**Homily for the Installation of Father Tom Meyer as Pastor  
Blessed Sacrament Parish, Quincy**

**Tuesday of the 17<sup>th</sup> Week in Ordinary Time, Year A - July 28, 2020**

**† 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 Tom Meyer as Pastor for Blessed Sacrament Parish here in Quincy.

As we gather today for this Mass, we mark the beginning of a new chapter in the life of the parish of Blessed Sacrament. Our daily Masses these past weeks have continued to dive deep into the parables we have also heard at our Sunday Masses from Matthew 13. Sometimes repetition, especially of such familiar parables, can lull us into thinking that we've already heard everything there is to hear. But today, in the context of this Mass of Installation for your new pastor, Our Lord calls us to really dig into the words He speaks, and offers us this particular context to let them sink into our hearts.

"Explain to us the parable of the weeds of the field" the apostles ask Jesus. Do we ask Him the same question? Do we come to Him often to ask Jesus the questions that sit on our minds and hearts, or do we hesitate, thinking they're not important or we should already know the answer? Jesus waits for

us here, in the Blessed Sacrament, to listen to our questions, and to offer us His answer.

“He who sows the good seed is the Son of man...” He tells us. *All* that is good, fruitful, beautiful, and abundant in our lives are gifts from Him. They are glimpses of what it means for us to be good wheat, to be “sons of the Kingdom.” Do we thank Him for those “seeds”? Do we meditate on His words each day? Do we allow them to sprout and grow in our hearts? Do we choose in how we act, how we use our time, or what we allow to concern us to be seeking to be the “righteous,” who “will shine like the sun in the kingdom of their Father”? The call to be sons of the kingdom is nothing less than the call to be disciples, and saints. May we renew our commitment to living out of that identity today!

I offer this same reflection to your new pastor. It is a great joy for me that Father Tom Meyer has accepted the call to serve as the local shepherd of the Catholic community of faith here. Today in a particular way he is entrusted with the pastoral care of all of you as an *Alter Christus*, another Christ, shepherding your souls in the name of God, and in collaboration with me, your bishop, both of us as servants of the Lord. His role as pastor is above all to lead

this parish closer to Christ, to assist Christ in His work of sowing the seed and raising children of the Kingdom.

At the same time, I also wish to express my deep appreciation to Father Chris Comerford for his dedicated ministry as your Pastor for the past three years. Our prayers go with him in his new assignment as Pastor of Ss. James and Patrick in Decatur.

Father Tom Meyer was ordained in 1998 and served as a parochial vicar at St. Anthony of Padua Parish in Effingham until 2002, and then at Our Saviour's Parish in Jacksonville until 2004. He was then named Pastor at St. Mary's in Edwardsville, where he remained until 2010, when he became pastor at Our Saviour's in Jacksonville, a position he held until this summer, during that time also pastoring St. Alexius in Beardstown, St. Fidelis in Arenzville and St. Luke in Virginia from 2015-2019. I am also grateful to Fr. Meyer for his tireless work as Dean of the Jacksonville Deanery for the past six years.

Fr. Meyer 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>1</sup> The prophet Micah 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.”

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 the next several 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>2</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 Comerford, 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 Meyer 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 Blessed Sacrament parish, 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> 1 Peter 4:10.

<sup>2</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>.