

**Homily after Pontifical Requiem Mass  
for the  
Latin Liturgy Association**

**St. Mary of Victories Church  
St. Louis, Missouri**

**Mass #14: "Fratribus, propinquis et benefactoribus"  
(same as 3<sup>rd</sup> Mass of All Souls Day)**

**Readings: Revelation 14:13 and John 6:51-55.**

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

My beloved brothers and sisters in Christ, today we have been given the great grace to participate in this beautiful Requiem Mass, praising God with the greatest of human talent and devotion, and we have united our prayers to those of Christ in His perfect sacrifice to the Father. The gift of the Eucharist, of Christ's abiding presence with us, is, of course, bestowed upon us at every Mass, and has always been essential to the faithful of every age, yet, in our current day, have we not been emphatically reminded of how much our whole world needs this gift of Christ's Body and Blood?!

I reference of course the previous few months during which throughout much of our world's precautions regarding the coronavirus have left many Catholics without easy participation in the Mass or reception of Communion. Having been distanced from the source and summit of our faith should bring out in all our hearts today even great joy and gratitude to have been entrusted again with the gift of Christ Himself. Today he "abides" with us; He gives His own Flesh and Blood, as food and drink, to nourish

us, give us eternal life, and unite us profoundly with our Triune God. May our joy today bear witness to our faith in Christ's abiding and nourishing love!

The gift of the Holy Eucharist was certainly appreciated by the great patron of this city, St. Louis. That king and crusader had tremendous devotion to the greatest of Sacraments, prolonging his daily participation in the Mass with the recitation of the Divine Office, and continuously exhorting his family and people to greater faithfulness and prayerfulness.<sup>1</sup> It was precisely this love for the incarnate Christ that led St. Louis to be willing to sacrifice even his life by participation in the 7<sup>th</sup> and 8<sup>th</sup> Crusades. No hatred motivated the king to this task, only a love for Him, whom Louis considered His King and Savior. This was a man surrounded by the pressures and challenges of being a medieval monarch, yet it was His tenacious love for Christ in the Eucharist, that allowed him to remain centered on His faith within those struggles, and, in the end, to live a life of heroic virtue, being canonized only 27 years after his death in 1270.

But St. Louis' devoted faith is only the first half of his love for God. He, in what is called his credo, writes that:

*The two arms with which we must hold God clasped, are firm faith and good works. We need both of these together if we wish to keep hold of God, for either one of them is useless without the other [...] We see, then, that we must combine firm faith with good works. Daily the devils fight with us to deprive us of one or the other, and on the last day, by which I mean the day of our death, they will strive even harder than they do now. On that day may God and His Mother and all His saints grant us their help!<sup>2</sup>*

The great truth we celebrate at this Mass, that of the Passion and Resurrection of Christ, is precisely the promise of God: that He can bring tremendous good, even eternal and salvific good, out of what appears to all the world (without faith) to be an entirely ugly, pointless, crucifixion. This is a truth we already can find in our own experience after the coronavirus: that God can bring great good out of even something seemingly so opposed to the normal economy of grace. He can bring devotion out of deprivation, love out of loss, humility out of hunger.

Today I stand before you and promise that He can also bring great good out of the dissension, disorder, and depravity that we have been so strongly confronted with these past weeks, and it comes about in the second “arm” of the life of faith that St. Louis teaches us. If the coronavirus, and all the hardships we have endured because of it, can lead us to a firmer *faith* with which to hold fast to God, cannot the recent turmoil, strife, and disunity we face in our country, and have seen so close to our own homes surrounding the iconic Apotheosis of St. Louis Statue, direct our efforts towards St. Louis’ second “arm” with which to clasp God, *good works*? Our faith in God tells us that this is the case.

Where love is lacking, our lives must witness – in small acts and large – to the love of Christ that impels us. Where peace is wanting, our actions – at home and out in our world – must be ones that pass on the peace of Christ. Where hope dwindles, our choices must radiate – to all around us – the evident end for which we strive, that is, to become saints and to live forever with God in His Kingdom.

Sadly, some radical anarchists who are ignorant of history have recently destroyed statues in California of a noteworthy saint, Saint Junípero Serra, whose feast day was this past July 1<sup>st</sup>. Saint Junípero Serra was a Franciscan missionary priest from Majorca, Spain, who came to bring the Gospel of Jesus Christ to the New World in 1750. He established nine of the California missions, baptized over 6,000 native peoples, and is recognized as a builder of the State of California. Pope John Paul II beatified him in 1988, calling him “an exemplary model of the selfless evangelizer.” Pope Francis canonized him as a saint during his visit to the United States in 2015.

After a statue of Saint Junípero Serra was torn down in Golden Gate Park in San Francisco on June 19 by a crowd of about 100 people, Archbishop Salvatore Cordileone, the Archbishop of San Francisco, was joined by several dozen Catholics in prayer and acts of spiritual reparation.

In his remarks, Archbishop Cordileone said, “Evil has made itself present here. So we have gathered together to pray for God, to ask the saints . . . for their intercession, above all our Blessed Mother, in an act of reparation, asking God's mercy on us and on the whole city, that we might turn our hearts back towards him. I feel such a great wound in my soul when I see these horrendous acts of blasphemy disparaging the memory of Serra who was such a great hero, such a great defender of the indigenous people of this land.”

A statue to Saint Junípero Serra was also torn down in the plaza outside the first church of the Archdiocese of Los Angeles, *Nuestra Señora Reina de los Ángeles*, in downtown Los Angeles. The Archbishop of Los Angeles, Archbishop José Gomez, who also serves as the President of the

United States Conference of Catholic Bishops, wrote a Letter to the faithful for the Memorial of St. Junípero Serra, in which he said, “Historical memory is the soul of every nation. What we remember about our past and how we remember it defines our national identity – the kind of people we want to be, the values and principles we want to live by. But history is complicated. The facts matter, distinctions need to be made, and the truth counts.”

Some protesters right here in St. Louis, also ignorant of history, have called for the removal of the statue of St. Louis, who was King of France from 1226 to 1270, and after whom the city is named. In addition to taking part in the Crusades to reclaim the Holy Land from Muslim invaders, he established hospitals, and personally cared for the poor and for lepers. He was canonized in 1297.

Cardinal Timothy Dolan, Archbishop of New York and former Auxiliary Bishop of St. Louis, who has a doctorate in church history, wrote in the June 28<sup>th</sup> issue of *THE WALL STREET JOURNAL*, “Defacing, tearing down and hiding statues and portraits is today’s version of Puritan book-burning. Our children need to know their country’s past, its normative figures and their virtues and vices. . . . As a historian by training, I want to remember the good and the bad, and recall with gratitude how even people who have an undeniable dark side can let light prevail and leave the world better. I want to keep bringing classes of schoolchildren to view such monuments, and to explain to them how even such giants in our history had crimes, unjust acts and plain poor judgment mixed in with the good we honor.”

Our Mass today is fittingly a requiem. In Latin, the word *requies* means *rest* or *repose*. Yes, we pray for eternal rest for our beloved brethren and benefactors whom we entrust to the Lord's mercy, but this Requiem Mass must also be for us a reminder of the fleetingness of our own lives, and an impetus to be willing to consecrate every moment of our lives to glorify God. Our Lesson today fittingly reminds us: "Blessed are the dead who from now on die in the Lord." "Blessed indeed," says the Spirit, "that they may rest from their labors, for their deeds follow them!" Our deeds will "follow" us as well. Just as the deeds of St. Louis witness to his giving both his arms for the Lord – in faithful devotion and heartfelt charity – so we must look to our own lives – cherishing and renewing our love for Christ's Body and Blood, and devoting ourselves no matter what is happening around us to continuous, if humble, acts of love.

May God give us this grace, amen.

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<sup>1</sup> Cf. "He so arranged the business of governing his country that every day he heard the hours of the Office sung, and a Requiem Mass without chant, and then a sung Mass of the day or the feast, if there was one. Every day after dinner he rested on his bed, and when he had slept and rested, he said the Office of the Dead privately in his room with one of his chaplains, before hearing Vespers. In the evening he heard Compline." (*The Life of St. Louis*, p. 36, n. 54).

<sup>2</sup> John of Joinville, *The Life of St. Louis*, tr. René Hague, New York: Sheed and Ward, 1955, p. 236, n. 846 and 848).