

**Homily for the Renewal of the Consecration of the United States of America to
the Blessed Virgin Mary**

Friday, May 1, 2020

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

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

Reverend Fathers, deacons, consecrated religious, seminarians, and my dear brothers and sisters in Christ: it is good for us to join in prayer today for this Renewal of the Consecration of the United States of America to the Blessed Virgin Mary. As the world continues to face the ongoing effects of the global pandemic of the coronavirus, Archbishop José H. Gomez of Los Angeles and President of the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops, has asked the bishops of the United States and the faithful of our dioceses to join him and the Canadian Conference of Catholic Bishops in this renewal of the consecrations of the two nations to the care of our Blessed Mother.

Through a collective dedication or entrustment of a nation to Mary, an act of consecration is meant to be a reminder to the faithful of the Blessed Mother's witness to the Gospel and to ask for her effective intercession before her Son on behalf of those in need. Bishop John Carroll of Baltimore,

the first bishop of the United States, promoted devotion to Mary, the Mother of God, and placed the United States under her protection in a pastoral letter of 1792. The twenty-one bishops attending the Sixth Provincial Council of Baltimore in 1846 determined to name the Blessed Virgin Mary, under the title of the Immaculate Conception, as the Patroness of the United States, and Pope Pius XI approved this decision the following year. More recently, the dedication of the National Shrine of the Immaculate Conception in Washington, D.C. in 1959 was the opportunity for the bishops to once again consecrate the nation to the Blessed Mother. Several Popes have likewise consecrated the world to Mary on various occasions.

Our prayers of consecration to the Blessed Mother follow a similar action of the bishops' conference of Latin America and the Caribbean, who consecrated their nations to Our Lady of Guadalupe on Easter Sunday. The renewal of consecration in our country today does not change the designation of Mary as the Patroness of the United States under the title of the Immaculate Conception. Rather, this prayer reaffirms and renews previous Marian entrustments, and unites us in solidarity with our Holy Father, who recently established the Memorial of the Blessed Virgin Mary, Mother of the Church, as a source of protection and strength.

As Archbishop Gomez said in a letter to the American bishops, “This will give the Church the occasion to pray for Our Lady’s continued protection of the vulnerable, healing of the unwell, and wisdom for those who work to cure this terrible virus.”

Here in the Diocese of Springfield in Illinois, when the See City was moved from Alton to Springfield in October 1923, this Cathedral was built five years later and was dedicated on October 14, 1928 to the Blessed Virgin Mary under her title of the Immaculate Conception, who is also the Patroness of our diocese. In 2003, when our diocese celebrated the 150th anniversary of its founding, originally as the Diocese of Quincy in 1853, a special icon of “Mary, Mother of God, the Life-giving Spring” was commissioned and placed in a shrine here in our Cathedral. So has had and continues to have a special place in our diocese as well as in our country.

Each year, the Church seeks the special intercession of the Mother of God during the month of May. Today, May 1st, is also the feast day of St. Joseph the Worker. As many people are out of work due to the effects of the coronavirus on businesses, we turn also to St. Joseph, the chaste spouse of the Blessed Mother and who taught Jesus how to work as a carpenter, for his intercession for all those who are unemployed, that they may soon be able

to return to work and give glory to God through their labors. May the Holy Family – Jesus, Mary, and Joseph – bring an end to this pandemic and shower our nations with an abundance of graces for years to come.

May God give us this grace. Amen.