

**Homily for the 12<sup>th</sup> Sunday of the Year – Cycle B**  
**Cathedral of the Immaculate Conception**  
**June 20, 2021**

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

Reverend Fathers and Deacons, consecrated religious, my dear brothers and sisters in Christ:

It is good that we are here for the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass as our nation observes Fathers' Day. I wish all fathers – biological fathers, adoptive fathers, and spiritual fathers – a very happy Father's Day. We give thanks to God our Father for the gift of fatherhood, and we pray for the intercession of Saint Joseph, the foster father of Jesus, during this Year of Saint Joseph, for many blessings upon all fathers in the years ahead.

Beginning this Tuesday, June 22<sup>nd</sup>, the feast of Ss. Thomas More and John Fisher, the Catholic Church in the United States will observe Religious Freedom Week, inviting Catholics to pray, reflect, and act to promote religious freedom. Here in our diocese we will pray the rosary for religious freedom in our country on Wednesday, June 23, at 12:00 noon, here in our Cathedral of the Immaculate Conception. All are invited to join us in praying

the rosary in person or participate through the diocesan Facebook page, YouTube page, or [dio.org/live](http://dio.org/live).

This Tuesday also marks the eleventh anniversary of my installation as the Bishop of our diocese. I give thanks to God for the graces received over the past eleven years of my episcopal ministry and I pray for the intercession of my patron saints, St. Thomas More and St. John Fisher, asking God's blessings on me and everyone in our diocese in the years ahead.

When I was named a Bishop by Pope John Paul II in 2003, my family gave me a framed picture depicting Jesus standing in a boat calming the storm. It is based on the Gospel passage that we just heard. The picture hangs in my office at the Catholic Pastoral Center here in Springfield and serves to remind me that Jesus is with us in the ship that is the Church, and we should turn to Him when the boat is battered by various storms.

We live indeed in stormy times. This past week brought some relief to the storms that have been afflicted the Church recently. The first was the unanimous decision of the United States Supreme Court in favor of Catholic Social Services of the Archdiocese of Philadelphia, which had been prevented by the City of Philadelphia from providing foster care services because they would not place children in homes of same-sex couples.<sup>1</sup> This

case was decided on narrow grounds specific to the facts in Philadelphia, so it remains to be seen what effect this will have in other places, such as here in Illinois where our Catholic Charities were forced out of foster care and adoption services ten years ago because we would not agree to the State's demands that we act contrary to our religious beliefs.

The other hopeful sign this past week was the affirmative vote of the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops authorizing the drafting of a document on the meaning of the Eucharist in the life of the Church. The measure was approved by a majority of 73% of the bishops who voted. Unfortunately, the minority of bishops who are opposed to drafting this document were very vocal in their opposition, so the path ahead to final approval of a clear statement of the Church's teaching and discipline in this important matter will not be easy. Please pray for the Holy Spirit to guide us through these storms.

In this regard, I want to share with you a sermon given centuries ago by St. Augustine that was based on the Gospel passage of Jesus calming the sea. Jesus had been sleeping in the stern of the boat, and the disciples awakened Him, pleading with Him in their fear to save them. The sermon by St. Augustine is short, but eloquent. In it, he said:

1. *“By the Lord’s blessing, I will address you upon the lesson of the Holy Gospel which has just been read, and in it I want to urge you not to let the faith sleep in your hearts against the storms and waves of this world. After all, it can scarcely be true that Christ the Lord had power over death, and did not have power over sleep, and that sleep possibly overtook the Almighty against His will, as He was sailing out. If you do believe this, He is asleep in you, but if Christ is awake in you, your faith is awake too.*

*The Apostle prays, **That Christ may dwell through faith in your hearts (Ephesians 3:17)**. So even the sleep of Christ is a sign and sacred symbol. The people sailing in the boat are souls crossing the present age **on a paltry piece of wood (Wisdom 10:4)**. The boat was also a figure of the Church. We are all of us temples of God, and every one of us is sailing a boat in his heart, and we do not suffer shipwreck if we think good thoughts.*

2. *You have heard an insult – it is a high wind; you are angry – it is a wave. So as the wind blows and the waves break, the boat is in peril, your heart is in peril, your heart is tossed about. When you hear the insult, you are eager to avenge it; you do avenge it, and by giving way to someone else’s evil, you suffer shipwreck. And why is that? Because Christ is asleep in you. What does it mean that Christ is asleep in you? That you have forgotten Christ. So wake Christ up, remember Christ; let Christ stay awake in you, think about Him.*

*What were you wanting? Revenge. It has escaped your memory that He, when He was being crucified, said, **Father, forgive them, because they do not know what they are doing (Luke 23:34)**. The One who was asleep there in your heart did not want revenge. Wake him up, call him to mind. The memory of Him is His word; the memory of Him is His command. And if Christ is awake in you, you will say to yourself, "What sort of person am I, wanting to get my own back? Who am I, brandishing menaces against another human being? I may well die before I get my own back. And when I depart from the body in a rage, breathing out fire and slaughter, thirsting for revenge, that One who did not wish to be avenged will not receive me. No, He will not receive me, the One who said, **Give, and it will be given you, forgive and you will be forgiven (Luke 6:38, 37)**. So I will restrain my anger, and return to calmness of heart." Christ has commanded the sea, and there has come a great calm.*

**3.** *What have I said about anger, you should hold onto as a rule to be followed in all your temptations. A temptation arises, it is a wind; you are troubled by a wave. Wake Christ up, let Him talk to you. **Who is this, when even the winds and the sea obey Him? (Matthew 8:27)**. Who is this, whom the sea obeys? **He is the sea, and He made it (Psalm 95:5)**. **All things were made through Him (John 1:13)**. Imitate the winds and the sea instead: submit to the creator. At Christ's command the sea hears, and will you be deaf? The sea hears, and the*

*wind drops, and are you still blowing? "What do you mean?" I say things, I do things, I think things up – what else is that but blowing, and not dropping at the word of Christ?*

*Let not the waves overwhelm you when your heart is upset by a temptation. Yet since we are only human, if the wind has driven us on and shaken our souls with passion, let us not despair; let us awake Christ, that we may sail on a calm sea, and so reach our home country. Let us turn to the Lord.<sup>2</sup>*

My brothers and sisters in Christ, heeding these words of St. Augustine, if you are experiencing fear as suffering, despair, or anxiety, as Job did, ask God to pull you close, to embrace you in such a way that you know you have all you need. If you are experiencing fear as shame and guilt, like St. Paul, ask Jesus to break the chains of old sins, habits, and events, so that you can experience newness of life and redemption. If you feel the storm and, like the disciples are terrified, Jesus is waiting for you to wake Him in your hearts where He sleeps, and ask Him to speak that powerful command into your world: "Be calm. Be still."

May God give us this grace. Amen.

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<sup>1</sup> *Fulton v. Philadelphia*, United States Supreme Court, decided June 17, 2021; accessed online at [https://www.supremecourt.gov/opinions/20pdf/19-123\\_g3bi.pdf](https://www.supremecourt.gov/opinions/20pdf/19-123_g3bi.pdf)

<sup>2</sup> Cf. <http://corinquietam.blogspot.com/2012/08/st-augustines-sermon-63-wake-up-christ.html> and <https://www.newadvent.org/fathers/160313.htm>.