

**Homily for the Blessing of the  
Church Following the Renovation of  
All Saints Church  
White Hall, Illinois**

**May 30, 2021**

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

*Blessed the people the Lord has chosen to be his own.<sup>1</sup>*

Father Mariadas, members of All Saints Parish in White Hall, my dear brothers and sisters in Christ: these words taken from the Psalm 33 set the tone for our Mass today on this Trinity Sunday, as we bless this newly renovated church of All Saints to the Glory of God, for the Lord has blessed us and has chosen us to be his adopted sons and daughters.

As I look back at places that have been important to me in my lifetime, I notice something very unusual. The house that I grew up in was an apartment building where our whole family lived above our family pharmacy. When I say, “our whole family,” that would be my Mom, Dad, six brothers and two sisters. It was a stately-looking building, at least from the outside. It was built in 1917 with a façade of heavy granite stone on the two sides of the building that faced the main street and the side street of the corner where our drug store stood. Unfortunately, the other two sides of the

building, the one adjacent to the next-door building and the side facing the back alley, were built with regular red-face brick. I say, “unfortunately” because the two sides with the heavy granite façade over the years gradually pulled the building down towards those two sides, which were much heavier than the other two sides with the lighter brick. Some of the granite stone eventually fell off the top of the building. No one was hurt, but it would have been too expensive to repair and so the whole building was torn down in 1979.

Another memorable building in which I spent a lot of time in my youth was the old Chicago Stadium. I remember my Dad taking me as a young boy along with Mom and my older brother and sister and climbing up the stairs to the second balcony to watch the Chicago Blackhawks play hockey. What a historic building, and to this day I still “remember the roar” of the crowd. Unfortunately, Chicago stadium was demolished in 1995 after the United Center was built across the street.

Then, of course, there is that other sports shrine where I was frequently in attendance over the years since my youth, Comiskey Park. It was demolished in 1991 and was replaced by a new ballpark.

The college seminary that I attended was known as Niles College of Loyola University, located in the Village of Niles, Illinois. In 1995, the Archdiocese moved the college to Loyola's Lake Shore Campus, selling the old facilities to a developer who tore down all the buildings and replaced them with condominiums.

Are you starting to see a pattern here?

One implication from all this might be that you're feeling a little shaky about the future of this building right about now! But I do assure you that not *every* building that I've frequented in my life has been torn down or crumbled to the ground! In fact the church of my home parish, St. Casimir Church, where I was baptized and confirmed, made my First Confession, received my First Communion, and celebrated my First Mass as a priest and as a bishop, is still standing and looking quite grand. So my string of bad luck does not seem to affect church buildings!

My point in telling you about these demolished buildings is simply to serve as a reminder that everything in this world will eventually pass away, even this beautifully renovated church that we are dedicating today. I don't say that to put a damper on our festivities or on your well-deserved sense of accomplishment, but to keep our liturgy in perspective. Every Eucharist is a

foretaste of heaven, and a beautiful new worship space such as this one helps us to imagine the delight of sharing in the heavenly banquet someday in the splendor of God's kingdom. But let's not lose our focus on that prize. We don't want to be like the traveler who was so enamored with the pleasant sights along the way that he forgot where he was going.

Our scripture readings today help us to keep that focus. The first reading that we heard was from the Old Testament Book of Deuteronomy, where Moses tells the People of Israel that "the LORD is God in the heavens above and on earth below, and that there is no other." If they keep God's statutes and commandments, they and their children will prosper and have a long life in the Promised Land.

Our second reading from Saint Paul's Letter to the Romans reminds us that the Holy Spirit leads us to God the Father to be His adopted sons and daughters, and thus heirs with Christ to His sufferings and glory.

Today's Gospel passage is from the conclusion of Gospel of St. Matthew, where the Lord's final words to the apostles are to send them out on a mission to convert the world, telling them, "Go, therefore, and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the

Son, and of the Holy Spirit,” teaching them to observe all God’s commands, promising that He will be with us always.

Since that time, Christians have been baptized in the name of the Holy Trinity as Christ commanded. Thus, the Trinity is the hallmark of our faith, beginning and ending our prayers with the sign of the cross as we invoke the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit. The Trinity is the mystery that defines our faith, even if we do not fully comprehend that mystery.

The fact that we have difficulty explaining or describing the Holy Trinity does not in any way diminish its significance for us. After all, many of life’s greatest joys are difficult, if not impossible to describe. For example, try describing the taste of water to someone who has no sense of taste, or explaining different colors to a blind person who has never seen a blue sky or green grass. How does one describe what it means to fall in love?

Thus, it should come as no surprise that we struggle to describe the perfect communion of love of the Triune God.

Today’s blessing Mass provides a unique opportunity to explain the meaning and purpose of this church building through the lens of the blessing ceremony. At the beginning of the Mass today, I sprinkled all of you, the

people gathered here, with the blessed water that recalls our own baptism, by which we were made as a part of God's holy people.

At the Offertory of this Mass, incense will be burned on the altar *to signify that Christ's sacrifice...ascends to God as an odor of sweetness, and also to signify that the people's prayers rise up pleasing and acceptable, reaching the throne of God.*<sup>2</sup>

Finally, I note the significance of the candles on the altar. Since the altar is a symbol of Christ, the light signifies that Christ is the *light of the world.*<sup>3</sup> The candles remind us that we, who share in His life through Baptism and the Eucharist, are to reflect the light of Christ in the way that we live our lives.

In this way, my dear brothers and sisters in Christ, it is in this sacred space that we, like the disciples, have an opportunity to encounter the Living God. May you, through the sacraments, particularly the sacrament of the Most Holy Eucharist, come to know our Lord and strive to follow Him as His disciples.

As you may be aware, I have a custom of singing in my homilies at Confirmation as well as on special occasions such as this. As we dedicate this sacred space, I would ask that you join in repeating after me this one verse

of the song, "Holy Ground."<sup>4</sup> May you always draw your strength from the Lord's presence that dwells in this sacred place.

**Holy Ground**  
**By: Christopher Beatty**

This is holy ground

We're standing on holy ground

For the Lord is here

And where He is is holy

This is holy ground

We're standing on holy ground

For the Lord is here

And where He is is holy

May God give us this grace. Amen.

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<sup>1</sup> Psalm 33:12

<sup>2</sup> DA, no. 22

<sup>3</sup> John 9:5

<sup>4</sup> Christopher Beatty, "Holy Ground," (Birdsong Music/BMG Songs, EMI CMG Publishing, 1982).