

**Homily for the Dominican Monastery of Mary the Queen  
Mass of Blessing for their New Monastery and Dedication of their Chapel and Altar**

**Dominican Monastery of Mary the Queen | Girard, IL | August 15<sup>th</sup>, 2022 AD**

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

Reverend Fathers, Deacons, Consecrated Religious, and my dear brothers and sisters in Christ: It is good to be here with all of you for this joyous occasion to bless this new monastery for our Dominican nuns, and to consecrate this Chapel for their prayer and the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass. It is fitting that we dedicate this Monastery of Mary the Queen on this Solemnity of the Assumption of the Blessed Virgin Mary. Today's feast day celebrates a mystery of faith. We believe that Mary, who was preserved from all guilt of original sin, was assumed body and soul into heavenly glory, where she reigns as Queen of the Universe. This is a belief that Pope Pius XII first proclaimed in 1950, and in our time we still embrace the wonder of this dogma. More than a dogma, however, it invites us to reflect on our own destiny in light of this marvelous event in Mary's life, meaning that we also are bound for glory. Like Mary, each of us has a special place prepared for us in heaven by God and a particular path through this life to that final union with the Lord. That particular path given to each of us is called a "vocation," and the dedication

today of this brand new monastery in our Diocese is a hopeful sign of the vitality of the vocation of consecrated life in our Diocese.

I have been particularly blessed these past weeks to be shown the renewal of Consecrated Life that Our Lord is bringing about in our Diocese. In this regard, the Norbertines from St. Michael's Abbey in Orange, California, recently announced that they will be establishing a Priory here in our diocese in the coming year as part of our new Evermode Institute for the formation of Catholic school teachers and catechists on the property of the former Chiara Center. Only two weeks ago I was in Alton with the Sisters of St. Francis of the Martyr St. George to celebrate the Mass at which four of their sisters took final vows, two took temporary vows, and two were given their religious names and began their novitiate. In addition, just this past Saturday I was back in Alton to ordain two of the Oblates of the Blessed Virgin Mary as priests. Certainly, the Lord is at work in our parishes and throughout our diocese in other ways as well, but today's celebration reminds me of the essential role that our beloved religious sisters and brothers play in the life of our Church. I hope all of us take from this day not only the joy that we get to share with our Dominican Nuns today, but also are reminded to pray for them as they pray for us.

After ordination itself, the liturgy we celebrate today – the Dedication of a Church and Altar – is one of my favorites. Our Mass already has been filled with powerful symbols and gestures: from our solemn opening of this chapel before we processed in, then the blessing of water and the entire space to be a dwelling place for God, and now God’s word has been proclaimed between these walls for the first time. Notice how each of these actions is meant to happen in each of us as well! We too must make the choice to open our hearts to God; we too are consecrated in baptism, and re-consecrated to be a dwelling place of God each time we cleanse our hearts from sin, and we, too, must make time and space in our hearts for the Word of God to enter and move us.

But there are more beautiful rites to come. After this homily, we will first call upon all the saints and angels to pray with us here, to surround us as a “cloud of witnesses” of the power of God who made each one holy. Then we will turn to the altar, where the sacrifice of our salvation will be renewed at every Holy Mass to be celebrated here, God willing, for centuries to come. We will consecrate the altar and the walls of this church with the same chrism that anoints us at our baptism, again at our confirmation, and which is used to consecrate a priest’s hands at his ordination, as well as the bishop’s head at his episcopal consecration. Then we will solemnly burn incense upon the altar,

and all throughout this chapel, filling it visibly with smoke, as it is meant to be invisibly filled with prayer, a sweet offering that rises up to Our Heavenly Father. Then we will cleanse and cover the altar and surround it with the candles that mark where Christ will come. Finally, we will bring forward the offerings of bread and wine to be consecrated and transformed into Christ's Body and Blood, definitively allowing the Lord to enter, and consecrate, this place.

The gestures, objects, and symbols of this liturgy remind us of the constant invitation of God for us to open our hearts to His Love. The beautiful hymns and chants, and prayers and canticles of this Mass carry us aloft, fill us with grace, and allow our praise to reach the throne of God. They move us, change us, convict us, and sanctify us. But, if our focus remains only on the beautiful sounds, sights, and scenes of this liturgy, we risk missing the gift that God most wants to give us today: the gift of Himself. Strangely and surprisingly, it is in the moments of *silence* – the pause before each prayer, the breath as each hymn concludes, the moment that Jesus enters our hearts in Holy Communion – more than any of all those active moments – where we can best notice Our Lord's quiet voice and sublime embrace. These simplest and most serene moments of encounter with God are perhaps the ones we find

hardest to describe or quantify, but for that very reason they are the deepest and most enduring ones. We will not always have a glorious choir to carry our souls on high. We will not always have a splendid Church in which to pray. We will not always have families and friends and sisters around us to give such joy to our hearts. We will not always have the strength to build a monastery ... or bear the day's heat in Christ's vineyard ... but at any moment, and at any point in our lives, we can *always* step back into the silence of God, and find there that He is with us always.

Our world has banished silence from our lives. Stopping, stilling, quieting ourselves is too risky, too uncertain, too impractical ... but the truth remains that *only* in silence can we find God. It *is* risky to walk into the wilderness with only God to sustain us. Today's first reading for Our Lady's Assumption uses that Old Testament imagery of the wilderness as a symbol of the way she was invited into complete trust in God. Silence will often be our place of complete trust. There we can no longer depend on those who have secured us in their love. We have to abandon our own self-expectations that carry us through the day. We find that our strengths are small and insufficient, and our failures and weaknesses are all too evident.

Every one of us, at some point during our walk with the Lord, will find that He has invited us into the desert, into His silence. Our first instinctual response may be fear, uncertainty, anguish, or anger, but if we choose love over all those reactions, giving them, and giving ourselves, into the hands of God, we discover the beautiful truth that *He is enough*. In silence we have only God ... but in silence we discover that God ... only God ... and our relationship with God, is all we truly need. This is the point explained so beautifully by His Eminence, Robert Cardinal Sarah in his book, *The Power of Silence: Against the Dictatorship of Noise*. Only in *quiet* can we come to *know* the Father as the Son knows Him, and love the Father as the Son loves Him ... and find that nothing else matters. My dear sisters, when the Heavenly Father offers you slivers of His own divine silence, know they are a beautiful invitation into the depths of His heart. And know that your response of love, to simply allow your heart to rest in His, is all He needs to make you great saints, and bring great sanctity to His Church.

Paul, the great, the energetic, and the staunchest of Apostles, reveals to the Corinthians that he has discovered this same truth. Consider his proclamation of the kerygma: "But in fact Christ has been raised from the dead, the firstfruits of those who have fallen asleep." [1 Cor 15:20] Everything is

changed because Christ is raised! As he writes to the Romans, now *nothing* can separate us from the love of God. Sufferings cannot steal our interior union with Christ, but can actually deepen that communion. Weaknesses do not impede the Lord's work, but silently surrendered to God, they become places where His power echoes through our hearts. Our own virtues, righteousness, even faith will seem too little, yet they are enough to carry us into silent prayer, and there we find ourselves carried by the Lord of Heaven and Earth. The fact is that *nothing* can steal from us the gift of interior quiet given to us in relationship with God. Not only is His silence a gift of Love – the presence of His Love incarnate in our hearts – but it is a shelter in the storm, a firm foundation, an indestructible place of closeness with Him. My dear sisters, *no one ... no cross ... no failure* can steal from you that deepest place in your heart where God dwells with you. Protect that gift of His silence within, return often to it, treasure it, *for it is the Lord Himself*.

I am currently reading the journal of a Benedictine priest who chronicles the Lord's work in his own heart. He was shown, to his sadness, his own waning devotion to God. Christ was rekindling within him a desire for his own sanctification and that of all priests. The monk records in his book, *In Sinu Jesu*, one Thursday evening where the Lord clarified this call: "To all [priests] will

be offered the grace of a new outpouring of the Holy Spirit, to purify the priesthood of the impurities that have disfigured it, and to restore to the priesthood a brightness of holiness such as the Church has never had since the times of the Apostles." One might think that Jesus would then propose some great pilgrimage, conference, event, or sign, but instead He explains, "This sacerdotal Pentecost is being prepared already in silence and in the adoration of the Blessed Sacrament" (*In Sinu Jesu*, p. 9). This divine masterplan should not surprise us, for when Jesus was explaining how His disciples would bear fruit, He emphasizes only one essential task: "Remain in me."

I think Our Lady today would remind us of one way that we do that: *by letting Jesus remain in us*. As she carried the unborn Jesus in her womb, she found all that she could desire, and all that Israel desired – blessedness, mercy, strength, sustenance, the promise of indestructible closeness with God – by simply whispering her "yes" that welcomed Him silently into her heart. My dear sisters, you will constantly be tempted to do more and pray less, to fill your prayer rather than sit in silence, to think that Adoration is not enough ... but Jesus' promise is that nothing bears greater fruit in you, and in our world, than time simply spent silently with Him.



My dear Dominican Nuns, the Lord has given Himself to you in many ways, not least of which are the blessings of this glorious day. Truly, this day is a gift to all of us from Our Lord! My simple reminder is that the greatest of all God's gifts is when He gives Himself to us, and *that every moment of His silence is a treasured occasion when He renews that gift*. Never underestimate how much of a gift this is! Creation was brought into being with a thought of love. The Incarnation happened with a whispered "yes." Our redemption was accomplished when Christ bowed His head and laid down His life. The consecration at Mass occurs with the silent outpouring of God's Spirit upon the bread and wine. Finally, God's plan for all of us, to carry us body and soul into everlasting friendship with Him, was marvelously, but mutely, prefigured when He assumed His mother into eternal glory. *God's greatest works in our hearts will also happen in silence*. The simple question that He asks us each day: Will you let my silent Love dwell in your heart?

*Be still, my soul; the Lord is on your side;  
bear patiently the cross of grief or pain;  
leave to your God to order and provide;  
in ev'ry change he faithful will remain.  
Be still, my soul; your best, your heav'nly friend  
through thorny ways leads to a joyful end.*

*Be still, my soul; your God will undertake  
to guide the future as he has the past;  
your hope, your confidence, let nothing shake;  
all now mysterious shall be bright at last.  
Be still, my soul; the waves and winds still know  
his voice who ruled them while he lived below.*

*Be still, my soul; when dearest friends depart  
and all is darkened in the vale of tears,  
then you will better know his love, his heart,  
who comes to soothe your sorrows and your fears.  
Be still, my soul; your Jesus can repay  
from his own fullness all he takes away.*

*Be still, my soul; the hour is hast'ning on  
when we shall be forever with the Lord,  
when disappointment, grief, and fear are gone,  
sorrow forgot, love's purest joys restored.  
Be still my soul; when change and tears are past,  
all safe and blessed we shall meet at last.<sup>1</sup>*

May God give us this grace. Amen.

---

<sup>1</sup> German Title: *Stille, mein Wille; dein Jesus hilft siegen*; Author: Kathrina von Schlegel;  
Translator: Jane Borthwick (1855); Melody: *Finlandia*, by Jean Sibelius; Copyright: Public Domain.

SUBMISSION

532

## Be Still, My Soul

1. Be still, my soul: the Lord is on your side;  
 2. Be still, my soul: your God will un - der - take  
 3. Be still, my soul: when dear - est friends de - part,  
 4. Be still, my soul: the hour is has - t'ning on

bear pa - tient - ly the cross of grief or pain;  
 to guide the fu - ture as he has the past.  
 and all is dark - ened in the vale of tears,  
 when we shall be for - ev - er with the Lord,

leave to your God to or - der and pro - vide;  
 Your hope, your con - fi - dence let noth - ing shake;  
 then shall you bet - ter know his love, his heart,  
 when dis - ap - point - ment, grief, and fear are gone,

in ev - 'ry change he faith - ful will re - main.  
 all now mys - te - rious shall be bright at last.  
 who comes to soothe your sor - row and your fears.  
 sor - row for - got, love's pur - est joys re - stored.

Be still my soul: your best, your heav'n - ly Friend  
 Be still my soul: the waves and winds still know  
 Be still, my soul: your Je - sus can re - pay  
 Be still, my soul: when change and tears are past,

through thorn - y ways leads to a joy - ful end.  
 his voice who ruled them while he dwelt be - low.  
 from his own full - ness all he takes a - way.  
 all safe and bless - ed we shall meet at last.

Katharina von Schlegel, 1752  
 Tr. Jane Borthwick, 1855; alt. 1990; mod.

FINLANDIA 10.10.10.10.10.  
 Jean Sibelius, 1899; arr.  
 © Boethkopf & Härtel, Wiesbaden