

Homily for the Equestrian Order of the Holy Sepulchre of Jerusalem

Mass for Wednesday of the 20th Week in Ordinary Time, Cycle 2 | August 17th, 2022 AD

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

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My dear brothers and sisters in Christ here at the Cathedral, and all those joining us who are members of the Equestrian Order of the Knights and Ladies of the Holy Sepulchre of Jerusalem, it is good to be here with you this evening. These past few weeks I have had the chance to celebrate Masses with a number of different organizations and orders that take on different roles in the life of our Church. A few weeks ago, I attended the workshop of the Priestly Society of the Holy Cross in Pembroke, Massachusetts, near Boston. In mid-July, I had Mass for the International Congress of Medieval Canon Law in St. Louis. Later that week I celebrated Mass for the Association of Catholic Diocesan Archivists at Mundelein Seminary outside of Chicago. The following week I celebrated Mass at the summer conference of the Napa Institute in Napa, California. From there, I traveled to Rochester, Minnesota, to concelebrate the Mass for the Installation of Bishop Robert Barron as Bishop of Winona-Rochester. Then, two weeks ago I had Mass at St. Mary Church in Alton for the Franciscan Sisters of

the Martyr St. George, when four of their sisters took final vows, two took temporary vows, and three received their religious names and entered the novitiate. It was only several days after that when I welcomed six candidates into formation for our permanent diaconate here in the diocese, and a day later ordained two Oblates of the Blessed Virgin to the priesthood. Just on Monday of this week I dedicated the new Dominican Monastery of Mary the Queen outside of Girard, Illinois, where sixteen Dominican Nuns will soon take up residence, and at the end of this week I will join our Springfield Dominican Sisters to celebrate their 150th jubilee as a religious order. It has not only been a whirlwind of different visits, but it has been a vivid reminder of the breadth and variety of different *charisms* throughout the Church.

I am confident that all of you understand the idea of a *vocation*, the primary way of life by which the Lord calls us to respond to His Love and give ourselves in love to those around us. Generally speaking, the Church has seen three such primary vocations: consecrated life, holy orders, and holy matrimony. In addition to these major vocations, the Lord calls us to follow Him every day, and in specific ways even once we have “found” our primary vocation, ways in which we continue to give ourselves in service of Him and His Body, the Church.

The passage from the Prophet Ezekiel in today's first reading (Ez. 34:1-11) follows a report that the city of Jerusalem has been captured by the king of Babylon. From God's viewpoint this terrible tragedy was due solely to the failure of the royal house. Israel's kings pursued their own interests instead of serving God, the true king of Israel. As shepherds they were supposed to lead the people along the path of life. But their shepherding has led only to death and destruction. In the end, God's flock is scattered all over the earth. So God takes the initiative to save the flock. Ezekiel says that the people "were scattered for the lack of a shepherd," so God personally assumes the role of shepherd for the flock. Of course, Jesus is the Good Shepherd, and it is through the ministry of the ordained priesthood that God continues to provide shepherds for His flock.

In our Gospel passage this evening from Saint Matthew (Mt 20:1-16), the parable of the workers in the vineyard is a beautiful illustration of living out one's unique vocation or call in life. All of the people that the master eventually calls to work for Him are working on the same vineyard - they are all helping to bear fruit for the Kingdom, and all will be given the same reward of eternal happiness with the Master if they are faithful to that call - but some are called early in the day, and some late. We have to imagine that some are called to

prune the vines, and others may be asked to hoe or water or plant. If you have ever worked to grow grapes, or know someone who does, you know the vast number of different jobs that need to be done for those plants to thrive! Jesus' story beautifully expresses the reality of "charisms" in the life of the Church. Yes, many are called to married life, but within that large, "capital V" Vocation, some couples have a particular gift for hospitality, or intercession, or raising a big family. I think of my own mother and father, who had the hearts, and character, to raise us nine children in the faith! Similarly, many are called to consecrated life, but some have been given the grace to live a life focused on prayer and the life of their community, like the Dominican Nuns in Girard, or orders like the Poor Clares, or Cistercians, whereas others, like the Franciscan Sisters of the Martyr St. George, are teachers or nurses or other instruments of God's love out in the world. Even among priests, some are called to diocesan priesthood - working with their bishop, sometimes in parish ministry, or something in more particular roles in their diocese - and others are called to be priests within an order - like the Oblates of the Virgin Mary, who focus on spiritual formation, or the Norbertines, who in many different ways give their efforts to evangelization and catechesis.

Even those different groups I mentioned that I recently visited are living out a particular charism within their primary vocations. Canon lawyers, whether they are married or religious or priests, seek to understand how the Church has codified the Gospel into its structures and legislation. Archivists protect and pass on the Church's history. The Knights and Ladies of the Holy Sepulchre, who gather here tonight, work and sacrifice to support the Holy Father, and sustain Christians in the Holy Land, both the land where our Lord walked, but also the "Holy Land" of our churches, where they dignify our worship of God.

All of us here today are in God's vineyard. Let us ask Our Lord whether He is inviting us at this time to some particular work, a unique charism within our vocation, to bear fruit for His Kingdom.

May God give us this grace. Amen.