

**Homily for Mass and Commissioning of
Totus Tuus Teams for 2018**

**Memorial of the Immaculate Heart of Mary
June 9, 2018**

**Villa Maria Catholic Life Center
Springfield, Illinois**

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Bishop of Springfield in Illinois**

My dear brothers and sisters in Christ: it is good to be with you this morning as you near the conclusion of your training in preparation for the *Totus Tuus* program to take place this summer in the Diocese of Springfield in Illinois. I am grateful for your willingness to give your time and energy to this important work of bringing the Good News of the Gospel to the many young people of the parishes to which you will go.

The Irish writer George Bernard Shaw once wrote: "When I die I want to be thoroughly used up." Although these words were not inspired by faith, they do express the natural desire to give everything we have to living this life meaningfully and with fulfillment. Perhaps you have heard the same desire expressed by athletes before a big game: "I want to leave it all on the field, to give everything I've got." In our spiritual lives, our greatest desire should be the same: to give all that we are and all that we

have to God, out of love for Him. This is what *Totus Tuus* means: it was the episcopal motto of Pope Saint John Paul the Great, pledging to the Blessed Virgin Mary, "I am all yours." We also seek to give our all through the Blessed Mother for the glory of her Son.

Our first reading from today's Mass is very appropriate for this occasion as it reflects this idea of giving entirely of ourselves in the work of building up the body of Christ here on earth. Just a few moments ago we heard a portion of the conclusion of the second letter of Saint Paul to Timothy. I would like to draw four main themes out of this reading that I see as related to your work as missionary disciples of our Lord this summer and beyond.

First, at the beginning of our reading we hear Saint Paul charging Saint Timothy to *proclaim the word; be persistent whether it is convenient or inconvenient; convince, reprimand, encourage through all patience and teaching.*¹ These words from Saint Paul are just as appropriate for you as they were to Timothy. As you go out to the various parishes of our Diocese, you are charged to proclaim the Gospel to the young people that you will encounter. Whether it is easy or difficult, your goal should be to aid in

forming them into intentional disciples of our Lord through your being models of what it means to be Christ's disciples.

The second theme that I would like to examine from our reading is that Saint Paul tells Timothy that the work will not be easy, *for the time will come when people will not tolerate sound doctrine but, following their own desires and insatiable curiosity, will accumulate teachers and will stop listening to the truth and will be diverted to myths.*² You are very likely already aware that this is very much true today as it was when Saint Paul wrote these words. The young people to whom you will minister are presented with a myriad of "voices" calling out for them to put their own desires ahead of their faith and to follow a self-indulgent way of life.

Saint Paul goes on to exhort Timothy to be *self-possessed in all circumstances; put up with hardship; perform the work of an evangelist; fulfill your ministry.*³ These words constitute the third theme from our reading that I would like to draw to your attention. Even though at times you may have your work cut out for you in ministering to people who are distracted by the things of this life rather than focusing on things that will lead to eternal life, you must never give up. If you experience hardships, unite them to those of our Blessed Mother and our Lord. Be persistent in your

work as one who spreads the good news of the Gospel and fulfill your ministry as missionary disciples of our Lord.

At the end of our reading today Saint Paul tells Timothy:

I am already being poured out like a libation, and the time of my departure is at hand. I have competed well; I have finished the race; I have kept the faith. From now on the crown of righteousness awaits me, which the Lord, the just judge, will award to me on that day, and not only to me, but to all who have longed for his appearance.⁴

These words harken back to the theme of giving all that we are and all that we have in service of the Lord. This final theme should serve as a source of encouragement to all of us. May we follow the model of the saints that have gone before us and give everything that we have and everything to our Lord so that, when we finish this great race of life, we too will have kept the faith and receive the crown of righteousness that awaits us when we meet our Lord face-to-face at the end of our lives.

Once again, I thank all of you for your generosity in committing yourselves to be of service to the young people of our diocese. While the work may be challenging at times and you may not initially see the fruits of your labors, you can be assured that if you remain close to the Lord and

faithful to the work that you are being asked to do, the Lord will do great things through you in the lives of many. May you continually seek the intercession of our Blessed Mother, whose Immaculate Heart we commemorate today and under whose patronage this program has been entrusted, asking for her motherly love from her Immaculate Heart to assist you and all those you serve in drawing closer to her Son.

May God give us this grace. Amen.

¹ 2 Timothy 4:2

² 2 Timothy 4:3-4

³ 2 Timothy 4:5

⁴ 2 Timothy 4:6-8