

**Homily for the Mass for the  
Springfield Diocesan Council of Catholic Women Convention  
Immaculate Conception Church  
Mattoon, Illinois**

**Mass for Wednesday of the 26<sup>th</sup> Week in Ordinary Time (Y2) | September 28<sup>th</sup>, 2022 AD**

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Bishop of Springfield in Illinois**

My brother priests, and brothers and sisters in Christ: What a blessing it is for all of us to come together today for the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass. I am especially grateful this year to be joined with you around Christ's gift to us of the Eucharist. Last week I was with all the priests of the diocese for our convocation, during which we meditated on the reality of this gift where Jesus dwells in our Churches, and just this weekend I had the chance to speak at the Catholic Answers national convention on a related topic, the coherence with which our lives should match Jesus' gift of Himself in the Blessed Sacrament. On top of all these recent events, I also know that we are quickly approaching our diocesan year of the Eucharist beginning on December 8<sup>th</sup> this year, as well as our national year of the Eucharist in 2024.

Turning to the readings that the Church has given us today, the Lord continues to emphasize this theme. Luke gives us today several examples of the radicality with which Jesus called His followers. To one who wants to

follow Him, Our Lord reminds the man that “the Son of Man has nowhere to rest his head,” to another, needing to attend his father’s funeral, Jesus says “Let the dead bury their dead. But you, go and proclaim the kingdom of God,” and to a third who wanted to say goodbye to his family, “No one who sets a hand to the plow and looks to what was left behind is fit for the kingdom of God.” These are not the words of someone trying to win over fans or make it seem easy to follow where He is leading. Nowhere to be found is a promise of comfort, or tranquility, or even basic respect for family and customs. Jesus just straight out declares that His followers would have to be willing to leave behind everything that had previously given them security and stability and asks them to find that all in Him. It is an absurd claim *unless He can provide for us the fulfilment and safety* that we so often seek in our possessions, community, and family.

Possessions, community, family. Notice that these are precisely the things that are taken away from the ancient character of Job. We started at the beginning of his story a few days ago, where he is depicted as both a righteous man, but also one who is well-off. He had thousands of oxen, sheep, and camels; the honor of the community; and a big family. But on one unthinkable day Job lost all of this as calamity after calamity struck. The author of the book

of Job gives us some insight behind the scenes as we know that all of the disasters that strike this righteous man are actually the efforts of the Evil One, Satan, to cause Job to abandon God. Yet, whether we know this to be a Satanic attack or not, the reality is that Job loses first his possessions and home, then all of his children, and then he finds himself rejected and excoriated by his friends and even his wife, and even his health is taken from him. Possessions, community, and family are all lost on one horrible day!

Where can he look for answers? For a future? For any semblance of stability and security? What is left to him? I pray that none of us have, or will ever experience disaster of this magnitude, yet I suspect all of us at some point or another have similarly found ourselves adrift. Something we counted on – our finances, our house, our health – is taken from us. Someone we trusted – a friend, spouse, our employment, or culture – turns their back on us and we find ourselves abandoned, alone, or afraid. How many of us have lost someone we loved – a parent, a sibling, a spouse, a child? Even more than all those other trials, we find ourselves empty-handed, paralyzed, and crushed.

To whom do we turn to when all is lost? When all that shelters us is shown to be fragile? When our community evaporates when we need it most? When our family itself is split, or struck by loss? Where *do we look for answers?*

What do we say to someone who is in this sort of situation? Job still turns to God: to the God Who “is wise in heart and mighty in strength ... [Who] removes the mountains ... [and] shakes the earth ... [Who] commands the sun ... [and] stretches out the heavens.” Job cries out: “Who can say [God], ‘What are you doing?’ ... If I appealed to him and he answered me, I could not believe that he would listen to me.”

And here, finally, we come back around to Christ. Job, in his anguish and desperation, cannot believe that God will listen to him. He starts to think that God does not care, or will not answer. Job has followed the commandments. He has prayed and sacrificed and entrusted his family to the Lord, but when all is lost, he finds himself sinking into darkness with God seeming so far away. We can face this same temptation when we lose something of our shelter, community, or family. When catastrophe strikes, we can look to God and ask, “Where are you?” This is honest prayer in speaking openly with God!

But we also *must not forget* what Christ gives us, that Job never had. Christ promises to be with His Church *always*, through thick and thin and loss and desperation. He is always here in the tabernacle, that is His promise. And so, when we are lost, or have experienced loss, we must make the hard choice to come to Him, here, and pour out our hearts to Him. This is precisely what He

asked of His followers so many centuries ago: to leave behind all that kept them secure and find their security in Him.

We are well advised to count the cost of what being his disciple means. The cost is high. A cartoon featured a church sign that proclaimed: "Catholic Lite: everything you want in a parish and less" – 50 percent fewer commitments, three-minute homilies, entertaining, quick-in-quick-out Masses, no collection plate, five commandments (your choice), drive-through Communion and confession (the latter called "Toot and tell!").

As a Lutheran pastor put it, "Ninety percent of our parishes require less commitment than the local Kiwanis club." Another word for this is "cheap grace." The term "cheap grace" was coined by German theologian and martyr Dietrich Bonhoeffer in his book *The Cost of Discipleship*. He defined "cheap grace" as "preaching forgiveness without repentance, Baptism without Church discipline, Communion without confession. It is grace without discipleship, grace without the cross, grace without Jesus Christ."

Christ demands everything of us. We can begin that commitment today, in our demeanor and desire for Christ in Holy Communion. We can continue it tomorrow by just stopping in for a visit to Jesus in the Tabernacle. If we make the choice to give ourselves to Jesus in the Blessed Sacrament during the good

times, then if we are ever faced with hard ones, we will naturally look to Him to be our rock and our refuge.

May God give us this grace. Amen.