

**Homily for the Mass Celebrating the Golden Jubilee of Religious Profession of
Sister M. Angela Beezley
into the Community of the
Sisters of St. Francis of the Martyr St. George**

September 9, 2023

**St. Francis Convent Chapel
Alton, Illinois**

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

Reverend Fathers and Deacons, beloved Sisters of Saint Francis of the Martyr Saint George, and my dear brothers and sisters in Christ: it is good for us to be here to celebrate this Holy Eucharist, in which we give thanks to Almighty God and ask His blessings on Sister M. Angela Beezley as she celebrates her Golden Jubilee of religious profession. It was here at St. Francis Convent that Sister Angela made her profession of vows on August 15, 1974. We congratulate and commend you, Sister Angela, on reaching this milestone, and we express our gratitude for your fifty years of serving in the apostolate of your religious community, especially for the time you spend in prayerful adoration before the Blessed Sacrament. As you gaze upon the Real Presence of Our Lord, may His face shine His light upon you!

Just last month, Monsignor Hoefler and I had the joyful experience of visiting the Motherhouse of your community in Thuine, Germany, near

Münster. We visited St. George Church in Thuine, where Mother M. Anselma Bopp and Father John Gerard Dall co-founded your Order, and from which the Sisters of St. Francis of the Martyr St. George derive their name. However, I learned that your Sisters in Germany are called by the shortened name, "Thuiner Schwestern," referring to the town of Thuine, spelled T-h-u-i-n-e, but pronounced like "tuna." So I think from now on I will refer to your community as the "Thiune (tuna) Sisters"!

During our stay, we had wonderful visits with your elderly and infirm sisters at St Theresia Convent and St. Joseph Nursing Home, where I went to the rooms of the bedridden sisters and blessed each of them. We also had lunch with the sisters at your Motherhouse on August 14th, the feast day of Saint Maximilian Kolbe, to celebrate the name's day of Sister Maximilia. She and Mother Maria Cordis send you their greetings and their love.

In our first reading today, the prophet Hosea speaks of the covenant that God makes with his people as a spousal relationship of justice, loyalty, compassion and fidelity. Echoing this theme, Saint Paul in his letter to the Philippians encourages the followers of Christ to find solace in love, compassion and mercy, unity in mind and heart, acting not out of selfishness or out of vainglory, but rather with humble regard for others as more

important than ourselves. Jesus then tells us in the Gospel of Saint John that we are to remain in Him as He remains in us, like branches connected to the vine. If we remain in Christ and He remains in us, we will bear much fruit, because without Jesus we can do nothing.

Your founder, St. Francis of Assisi, remained in Christ and so Christ remained in Saint Francis and with his community, as Our Lord continues to be with us today as He promised. Devoted to Christ's crib, cross, and altar, Saint Francis would, later in life, suffer the wounds of the cross as had his Lord. As you know well, the cross and the wounded hands of Jesus, which Saint Francis was privileged to share, have become a symbol of your Order and its primary mission—to conform its members and the world to the likeness of the crucified Christ.

This is why we are here. We are here to celebrate the Golden Jubilee of Sister M. Angela Beezley's decision to give her life in sacrifice and devotion to our Lord, a decision prompted by her desire to reciprocate the love that our Savior poured forth from his wounded heart on the cross.

By Christ's coming to us in a way we can understand, as a person, and by a very peculiar means of fidelity—the cross—Jesus has embodied a way

to us that becomes our way back to His Father, a way St. Francis found and lived. And then he gathered a community to join him.

With Jesus and His disciple, Francis, we see the same dynamic: those who live the cross, who exalt the cross, will draw disciples to themselves. Self-sacrifice, for love, produces life.

Love becomes devotion—becomes likeness—and then that likeness lives. Truth be told, that is what will soon happen here, on this altar. The Lord will come in the most beguiling, unexpected way. He has already come as a child and died as a criminal. But here, on the altar—a symbol of the cross—He appears humbly before us. Here He comes as food, for He desires again to enter into us as nourishment for body and soul.

Here is our God who will find any way to get to us—a virgin mother, a miraculous birth, a humiliating death on a cross—even emptying Himself: bread and wine bears His likeness and comes alive for us as a gift of pure love.

What wondrous love is this, O my soul, O my soul

What wondrous love is this, O my soul

What wondrous love is this that caused the Lord of bliss

To bear the dreadful curse for my soul, for my soul

To bear the dreadful curse for my soul

*To God and to the Lamb, I will sing, I will sing
To God and to the Lamb, I will sing
To God and to the Lamb, who is the great I Am
While millions join the theme, I will sing, I will sing
While millions join the theme, I will sing*

*And when from death I'm free, I'll sing on, I'll sing on
And when from death I'm free, I'll sing on
And when from death I'm free, I'll sing and joyful be
And through eternity, I'll sing on, I'll sing on
And through eternity, I'll sing on*

May God give us this grace. Amen.