

**Homily Outline for the Mass and Blessing of the Mosaic of Saint Casimir
Saint Casimir Church of Mother of the Americas Parish
Chicago, Illinois**

**Solemnity of the Assumption of the Blessed Virgin Mary
August 15, 2024**

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

- I. It is good to be here at Saint Casimir Church of Mother of the Americas Parish, where my parents, siblings and I were all baptized, where my parents were married, and where I made my First Confession, First Communion, received the Sacrament of Confirmation, and celebrated my first Mass as a priest.
 - A. I served countless Masses here as an altar boy.
 - B. I also helped count the collection every Sunday when I was in high school!
- II. On this Solemnity of the Assumption as we honor the Blessed Virgin Mary, we celebrate the return of the Mosaic of Saint Casimir to this church, which we will bless at the end of Mass.
 - A. The mosaic has been displayed at the Vicariate IV office in Cicero since I became Auxiliary Bishop of Chicago in 2003.
 - B. The time has come to return the Mosaic of Saint Casimir to this church.
- III. Who was Saint Casimir?

Saint Casimir was the son of King Casimir IV, King of Poland and Grand Duke of Lithuania. His wife, Queen Elizabeth, was the daughter of the Holy Roman Emperor Albert II. Their marriage was arranged primarily for political reasons, giving King Casimir IV greater influence in Bohemia and Hungary, but their marriage also bore great spiritual fruit. They had thirteen children, the third being the saint we honor today, Saint Casimir, named after his father.

Saint Casimir was born on October 3, 1458, the second son and third child in the Polish royal family. King Casimir IV's father had converted to Catholicism from paganism and introduced Christianity to Lithuania. King Casimir IV was, therefore, raised in a good Catholic home which he also provided to his children. A faithful Catholic herself, Queen Elizabeth was the loving mother of her thirteen children.

As children born into royalty, Casimir and his siblings were well educated. From the age of nine until sixteen, Casimir and his older brother were tutored by a Polish priest named Father Jan Długosz. This good priest taught the boys Latin, German, law, history, rhetoric, and classical literature.

Casimir had no desire for power, war, riches, or nobility. Father Długosz had taught him well, and Casimir had fallen in love with his God and the Blessed Virgin. He prayed frequently, often slept on the floor, engaged in other penitential practices, spent entire nights meditating on the Passion of our Lord, dressed simply, and desired to live a life of chastity. He was charitable to the poor, manifested the virtues, and edified all who encountered him. He especially had a deep devotion to our Blessed Mother and each day sang an ancient hymn called, "Daily, Daily Sing to Mary."

When Casimir was only thirteen, the King of Bohemia and Hungary died and King Casimir IV asserted his right to name a successor. The Bohemians agreed and accepted Vladislaus, the King's firstborn son, as their king, but some of the Hungarians did not, preferring a godless tyrant named Matthias Corvinus. With the support of some of the Hungarian nobles, King Casimir IV decided to name his son Casimir to the Hungarian throne by force. Casimir was sent to lead the Polish army in battle against the Hungarians and take the throne. Casimir agreed out of obedience to his father, but his heart was not in it. He opposed the war, and in time the effort failed and Casimir returned to Poland. His opposition grew even stronger when he heard that Pope Sixtus IV had asked his father not to go to war. Upon Casimir's arrival home, his father was furious and imprisoned him in a tower for three months. Those three months, however, were just what Casimir longed for.

In the solitude of imprisonment, Casimir was able to return to his life of prayer and deepen his union with God. Afterward, he continued his studies and life of devotion, vowing to remain celibate for the Kingdom of God. His father was not pleased and attempted to arrange a marriage for him, but he refused. After completing his studies at the age of sixteen, Casimir worked

closely with his father, but his heart remained with God and the Blessed Mother. When Casimir was twenty, his father had to be absent from Poland for about five years, tending to matters in Lithuania. During those years, Casimir was put in charge of ruling Poland, which he did with thoughtfulness, justice, and charity. When Casimir was twenty-five, he became ill with a lung disease. His father rushed back to Poland to be with his son, and on March 4, 1484, at the age of twenty-five, Casimir died.

After his death, devotion to Casimir quickly exploded. Many people prayed to him, and many attributed miracles to his intercession. One notable miracle took place in 1519 when the Lithuanian army was engaged in battle with the Russians. It is said that Saint Casimir appeared to the Lithuanian soldiers in a vision and directed them to a place where they could best defend their city, which they successfully did. This might be the reason that Saint Casimir is the patron saint of both Poland and Lithuania.

Shortly after that miracle, it is believed that Pope Leo X carefully examined Casimir's life and miracles and was prepared to canonize him, but might have died before he was able to do so. Therefore, his successor, Pope Adrian VI, might have been the one to canonize him. Because those questions remained for some time, Pope Clement VIII officially confirmed Casimir's canonization in 1602, adding him to the Roman liturgical calendar for Poland and Lithuania. In 1620, Saint Casimir was added to the Roman Calendar of the universal Church.

Worldly power, riches, and honors were all within the grasp of this young prince, yet he chose the power, riches, and honors bestowed by the heavenly King instead. His heart was filled with faith from a very early age that only grew as he got older. Even after Casimir's death, God used him to inspire many. Ponder your own ambitions in life, and seek to imitate this young prince who rejected the lies of this world, preferring only the eternal truths of the Kingdom of God.¹

IV. ¿Quién fue San Casimiro?

San Casimiro de Polonia nació en 1458 en Cracovia. Era el tercero de los trece hijos de Casimiro, rey de Polonia. Muchos santos han salido de familias muy numerosas, y de esta clase de familias llegan a la Iglesia Católica excelentes vocaciones.

Su madre Isabel, hija del emperador de Austria, era una fervorosa católica y se esmeró con toda el alma porque sus hijos fueran también entusiastas practicantes de la religión. Ella en una carta a una amiga hace una formidable lista de las cualidades que debe tener una buena madre, y seguramente que esas cualidades fueron las que practicó con sus propios hijos.

Dicen los biógrafos de San Casimiro que su más grande anhelo y su más fuerte deseo era siempre agradar a Dios. Para eso trataba de dominar su cuerpo, antes de que las pasiones sensuales mancharan su alma. Siendo hijo del rey, sin embargo vestía muy sencillamente, sin ningún lujo. Se mortificaba en el comer, en el beber, en el mirar y en el dormir. Muchas veces dormía sobre el puro suelo y se esforzaba por no tomar licor. Y esto en un palacio real donde las gentes eran bastante inclinadas a una vida fácil y de muchas comodidades y comilonas.

Para Casimiro el centro de su devoción era la Pasión y Muerte de Jesucristo. En aquellos tiempos los maestros espirituales insistían frecuentemente en que para ser fervoroso y crecer en el amor a Dios aprovecha muchísimo el meditar en la Pasión de Jesucristo. Nuestro santo pasaba mucho tiempo meditando en la Agonía de Jesús en el Huerto y en los azotes que padeció, como también en la coronación de espinas y las bofetadas que le dieron a Nuestro Señor. Ratos y ratos se estaba pensando en la subida de Jesús al Calvario y en las cinco heridas del crucificado, y meditando en el amor que llevó a Jesús a sacrificarse por nosotros. Le gustaban los cristos muy sangrantes, y ante un crucifijo se quedaba tiempos y tiempos meditando, suplicando y dando gracias.

Otra gran devoción de Casimiro era la de Jesús Sacramentado. Como durante el día estaba sumamente ocupado ayudando a su padre a gobernar el Reino de Polonia y de Lituania, aprovechaba el descanso y el silencio de las noches para ir a los templos y pasar horas y horas adorando a Jesús en la Santa Hostia.

Sus preferidos eran los pobres. La gente se admiraba de que, siendo hijo de un rey, nunca ni en sus palabras ni en su trato se mostraba orgulloso o despreciador con ninguno, ni siquiera con los más miserables y antipáticos. Un biógrafo (enviado por el Papa León X a recoger datos acerca de él) afirma que la caridad de Casimiro era casi increíble, un verdadero don del Espíritu Santo. Que el amor tan grande que le tenía a Dios, lo llevaba a amar

inmensamente al prójimo, y que nada le era tan agradable y apetecible como la entrega de todos sus bienes en favor de los más necesitados, y no sólo de sus bienes materiales, sino de su tiempo, sus energías, de su influencia respecto a su padre y de su inteligencia. Que prefería siempre a los más afligidos, a los más pobres, a los extranjeros que no tenían a nadie que los socorriera, y a los enfermos. Que defendía a los miserables y por eso el pueblo lo llamaba "el defensor de los pobres".

Su padre quiso casarlo con la hija del Emperador Federico, pero Casimiro dijo que le había prometido a la Virgen Santísima conservarse en perpetua castidad. Y renunció a tan honroso matrimonio.

Los secretarios y otras personas que vivieron con Casimiro durante varios años estuvieron todos de acuerdo en afirmar que lo más probable es que este santo joven no cometió ni un solo pecado grave en toda su vida. Y esto es tanto más admirable en cuanto que vivía en un ambiente de palacio de gobierno donde generalmente hay mucha relajación de costumbres. La gente se admiraba al ver que un joven de veinte años observaba una conducta tan equilibrada y seria como si ya tuviera sesenta.

Se enfermó de tuberculosis, y el 4 de marzo de 1484, a la corta edad de... años, murió santamente dejando en todos los más edificantes recuerdos de bondad y de pureza. Lo sepultaron en Vilna, capital de Lituania.

A los 120 años de enterrado abrieron su sepulcro y encontraron su cuerpo incorrupto, como si estuviera recién enterrado. Ni siquiera sus vestidos se habían dañado, y eso que el sitio donde lo habían sepultado era muy húmedo.

Hasta después de muerto quería que en su sepulcro se honrara a la Virgen María a quien le tuvo inmensa devoción durante toda su vida.

En su idioma, el polaco, Casimiro significa: "el que impone la paz". (Kas = imponer, Mir = paz). San Casimiro trabajó incansablemente por extender la religión católica en Polonia y Lituania, y estas dos naciones han conservado admirablemente su fe católica, y aún en este tiempo cuando las gentes ven que está en peligro su religión, invocan al santo joven que fue tan entusiasta por nuestra religión. Y él demuestra con verdaderos prodigios lo mucho que intercede ante Dios en favor de los que lo invocan con fe.²

- V. It is fitting that we celebrate the return of the Mosaic of Saint Casimir to this church today on this Solemnity of the Assumption of the Blessed Virgin Mary, given Saint Casimir's great devotion to the Blessed Mother.
- A. The *Catechism of the Catholic Church* teaches that "the Immaculate Virgin, preserved free from all stain of original sin, when the course of her earthly life was finished, was taken up body and soul into heavenly glory, and exalted by the Lord as Queen over all things, so that she might be the more fully conformed to her Son, the Lord of lords and conqueror of sin and death. The Assumption of the Blessed Virgin is a singular participation in her Son's Resurrection and an anticipation of the resurrection of other Christians."³
- B. Today's feast 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.
1. This is a belief that Pope Pius XII first proclaimed in 1950, and in our time, we still embrace the wonder of this dogma.
 2. 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. In hearing Mary's story today, we are also hearing our own story. This is the whole point of our second reading. Paul tells us that "For just as in Adam all die, so, too, in Christ shall all be brought to life." We believe that all of us, like Mary, will live body and soul with God for all eternity. We profess this whenever we recite the Nicene Creed. Our Baptism brings us this great hope.
 3. In the Gospel, the words of Elizabeth to her cousin Mary are meant to be fulfilled in each of us as well: "Blessed are you who believed that what was spoken to you by the Lord would be fulfilled." We are called to live intensely this discipleship that holds such a great hope. Each of us can join Mary in proclaiming slowly and personally the Magnificat hymn. We know deep within our hearts that we, too, are called to magnify the Lord in our lives, to "proclaim the greatness of the Lord and rejoice in God our Savior."
- VI. May God give us this grace. Amen.

¹ <https://mycatholic.life/saints/saints-of-the-liturgical-year/march-4-saint-casimir/>

² <https://www.ewtn.com/es/catolicismo/santos/casimiro-de-polonia-14806>

³ *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, n. 966. See:
[https://www.vatican.va/content/catechism/en/part_one/section_two/chapter_three/article_9/paragraph_6_mary_-_mother_of_christ,_mother_of_the_church.html#\\$195](https://www.vatican.va/content/catechism/en/part_one/section_two/chapter_three/article_9/paragraph_6_mary_-_mother_of_christ,_mother_of_the_church.html#$195)