

**Homily for Mass Celebrating the 100<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of  
OSF Saint Anthony's Health Center  
Alton, Illinois**

**April 22, 2025**

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

My dear brothers and sisters in Christ:

It is good to be with you to celebrate the 100<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the founding of Saint Anthony's Hospital here in Alton, Illinois, now known as OSF Saint Anthony's Health Center.

In 1925, five pioneering Sisters of Saint Francis of the Martyr Saint George traveled from their General Motherhouse in Thurn, Germany, to expand their mission to America. The story is told that they arrived in Alton, Illinois, with less than three dollars between them and one bag of oranges. But they were rich in faith.

Thanks to generous donations, the Sisters were able to purchase the Nazareth Home, a combination orphanage and infirmary in 1925, and they renamed the home Saint Anthony's Infirmary. In 1956, the organization became a fully licensed hospital, operating as Saint Anthony's Hospital. In 1959, construction on a new wing of the hospital was completed.

Midnight Mass in 1964 marked the opening of the new chapel and the West Annex was completed in 1966. In 1970 an Intensive Care Unit was introduced. In the 1980's, Operating Rooms were opened and Surgery was added. An Emergency Room opened in 1983, with renovation completed in 1989. In 1988, The Women's Pavilion obstetrics unit was opened. In 1990 the Diabetes Treatment Center opened, and the first cardiac catheterization was performed at Saint Anthony's Health Center. In 1993 Saint Anthony's Foundation was created to facilitate charitable giving.

The year 2012 saw a complete renovation of Saint Anthony's cardiology services. The Cancer Center of Excellence Cancer Infusion Center opened in 2013. On March 17, 2014, Saint Anthony's Health System (SAHS) signed a Letter of Intent to affiliate with OSF Healthcare System of Peoria, one of the largest integrated health care systems in Illinois. On November 1, 2014, Saint Anthony's Health Center officially became OSF Saint Anthony's Health Center.

As Bishop of the Diocese of Springfield in Illinois, I express my gratitude as well as the appreciation of my predecessors and all the people of central Illinois who have benefited from the health care ministry founded by the Sisters of Saint Francis of the Martyr Saint George and now carried on

in collaboration with the Sisters of the Third Order of St. Francis as well as many lay people in the healthcare professions. In this Mass, we give thanks to Almighty God for all the blessings bestowed on Saint Anthony's Hospital during the past century and we pray for continued blessings on this healthcare ministry for many more years to come.

This year also marks another significant anniversary, namely, the seventeenth centenary of the Council of Nicaea, which is the basis of the Creed we still use today. Every Sunday after the homily at Mass, along with Catholics all over the world, we recite the Profession of Faith, known as the Nicene Creed. Just imagine, seventeen centuries during which, using these same words, billions of Christians have expressed their belief in God as the One who loves, the One who is beloved, and the One who is the Love between them. During that gathering in Nicaea, in the year 325, well before our lands were evangelized, the Council delegates came to a unified statement of who Jesus Christ is. We are the heirs of those who gathered so long ago, and we too believe in the mystery of God's continuing presence in our world, and in our call to live in that mystery while being Christ's hands and feet in our concrete service and generous love for suffering humanity.

When we say the words of the Creed, we are committing ourselves to beliefs that have practical, real-life implications. For example, when we say: “I believe in one Lord Jesus Christ, the only Begotten son of God... through Him all things were made,” we are expressing our belief in Christ’s identity as true God and true man. But we are also expressing our understanding of our own identity as human beings created in God’s image and disciples of Christ. In fact, when we say, “through Him all things were made,” we acknowledge that every part of God’s creation is graced and full of dignity.

In the last line of the Nicene Creed we profess, “I look forward to the resurrection of the dead and the life of the world to come. Amen.” The phrase “resurrection of the dead” refers here not to Jesus, but to all of us. Jesus tells His disciples very clearly that “the hour is coming in which all who are in the tombs will hear his voice and will come out, those who have done good deeds to the resurrection of life, but those who have done wicked deeds to the resurrection of condemnation” (John 5:28-29). Our celebration today comes just two days after Easter Sunday, so during this Octave of Easter we continue to rejoice in Our Lord’s resurrection by which we are given the joyful hope of being raised up to eternal life and everlasting happiness in the Kingdom of Heaven.

United States history is filled with stories of pioneers, bold men and women who made their way across what was for them a new world, to make a home for themselves. The word *pioneer* brings out a dimension of adventure and danger.

It may be said that Jesus was a pioneer, breaking new ground, “pioneering” the kingdom of God. He dared to teach with authority. He risked disapproval by the people and their leaders. Many reacted positively. We know that many did not, and demanded His crucifixion.

With His death on the cross, Jesus would seem to have lost the fight. But He would be “made perfect through suffering” by dying and then rising from the dead on the third day. We should never forget the cost Jesus paid as the pioneer of our salvation – for a little while “lower than the angels . . . bringing many children to glory.”

Today we honor the pioneers who founded St. Anthony’s Hospital 100 years ago. In our Eucharist today, we thank the Lord for leading us to salvation and for those who carry on His healing mission in our world today.

May God give us this grace. Amen.