

Homily for the 3rd Sunday of Easter – Cycle C

**Saints Mary and Joseph Church
Carlinville, Illinois**

May 4, 2025

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

My dear brothers and sisters in Christ: As your Bishop, it is good to be with you to celebrate Mass this morning here in Carlinville at Saints Mary and Joseph Church. We are celebrating a number of occasions in our Mass this morning. We are celebrating the patronal feast of your parish named after Saints Mary and Joseph, since the month of May is dedicated to Mary, the Mother of Our Lord and the Mother of the Church, and May 1st was the Memorial of Saint Joseph the Worker. We are celebrating the renovation of your sanctuary and altar. I will be administering the Sacrament of Confirmation to Blake Hayes. Today is the Third Sunday of Easter, as we continue to rejoice in Our Lord's resurrection. Today is the last day of the official mourning period for the death of Pope Francis and we pray for his eternal rest and the repose of his soul. Finally the Conclave of Cardinals to elect the new Pope will convene this Wednesday, May 7th, and we pray for the guidance of the Holy Spirit in this election of our new Holy Father.

Many articles have been written in the past several days about what we need in a new Pope. We could say that the most important criterion for the selection of a Pope was given by Jesus Himself in the Gospel that we just heard today for the Third Sunday of Easter (John 21:1-19), when Jesus asked Peter, “Simon, son of John, do you love me more than these?” We pray for a Pope who loves Jesus more than anyone else, and who will teach us how to love Jesus more.

It is fitting that we celebrate all of these significant moments as the Catholic Church continues to observe the National Eucharistic Revival, a three-year program dedicated to reviving a better understanding and appreciation for the Holy Eucharist and promoting weekly attendance at Sunday Mass and frequent reception of Holy Communion.

In October of 2023, we held our Diocesan Eucharistic Congress in the BOS Convention Center in Springfield, with 5,000 participants. This past July in Indianapolis, 60,000 Catholics gathered for our National Eucharistic Congress, and countless more joined us via livestream. Our Diocesan Eucharistic Congress and the National Eucharistic Congress were major parts of the National Eucharistic Revival, which now continues with a special Year of Mission. This Year of Mission calls for Catholics to share their

rekindled love of the Eucharist with other people. This is an essential aspect of our being disciples of Jesus Christ and stewards of God's gifts of creation.

This is a time for all of us to reflect on the significance of the Holy Eucharist and its impact on the way we live. We are all called to share God's love with others, and all of us who take our Christian identity seriously must live in such a way that our Christianity becomes evident in our words and in our actions.

Today in the Sacrament of Confirmation, Blake Hayes will receive the gifts of the Holy Spirit: wisdom, understanding, counsel, fortitude, knowledge, piety, and fear of the Lord. The fruits of the Spirit are perfections that the Holy Spirit forms in us as the first fruits of eternal glory. The tradition of the Church lists twelve of them: charity, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, generosity, gentleness, faithfulness, modesty, self-control, chastity (*Catechism of the Catholic Church* - paragraph # 1832).

If we are mindful of the gifts and fruits that the Holy Spirit has placed in our hearts, we will live in a very different and much better way than if we allow our hearts to be dominated by the seven capital or deadly sins: pride, envy, anger, avarice, gluttony, lust, and sloth. Bad habits are called vices.

Good habits are called virtues. Hearts full of sinful desires will be manifested in a life of vice. Hearts full of God's grace will be reflected in a life of virtue.

Immediately after my homily, Blake will renew his baptismal promises. The questions in the renewal of baptismal promises are taken directly from the Apostles' Creed. Similar to the Apostles' Creed is the Nicene Creed, recited by Catholics every Sunday after the homily at Mass. This year marks 1,700 years since the Council of Nicaea, which is when the Nicene Creed, which we still use today, was first adopted. Just imagine, seventeen centuries during which, using these 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, 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.

After I administer the Sacrament of Confirmation to Blake, I will bless your renovated altar. The *Introduction to the Order of the Dedication of an Altar* describes the significance of the altar in these words: "The early Fathers of the Church, meditating on the Word of God, did not hesitate to assert that Christ was the Victim, the Priest, and the Altar of His own Sacrifice. ... Since

Christ, Head and Teacher, is the true Altar, his members and disciples are also spiritual altars on which the sacrifice of a life lived in holiness is offered to God. ... In every church, then, the altar 'is the center of the thanksgiving that is accomplished through the Eucharist' around which the Church's other rites are ... ordered. Because it is at the altar that the memorial of the Lord is celebrated and His Body and Blood is given to the faithful, it came to pass that the Church's writers see in the altar a sign of Christ himself – hence the saying arose, 'The altar is Christ.'"¹

That is why bishops, priests, and deacons kiss the altar, and why everyone bows before the altar, because the altar represents Christ Himself.

Finally, this part of the church is called the sanctuary because a sanctuary is a place for that which is sacred, and Our Lord comes to us here on the altar at Mass and remains present in the tabernacle. As we go forth from here after receiving Holy Communion, we carry Christ with us in our hearts, so in a sense we all become a living sanctuary of Our Lord. May your hearts be the sanctuary where His love resides more fully, to the point of overflowing, so that through you, His merciful love will be made visible.

Lord, prepare me to be a sanctuary

Pure and holy, tried and true

With thanksgiving, I'll be a living

Sanctuary for You.²

May God give us this grace. Amen.

¹ *The Order of The Dedication of a Church and an Altar*, English translation according to the Typical Edition, Approved by the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops and Confirmed by the Apostolic See for Use in the Dioceses of the United States of America (Washington, D.C.: United States Conference of Catholic Bishops, 2018), Chapter IV, pp. 117-119, nos. 1-4

² John W. Thompson and Randy Scruggs, "Sanctuary" (Full Armor Publishing Company, 1982).