

**Homily for the Installation of Father Bruce Scott as  
Pastor of Holy Family Parish, Decatur, Illinois  
Mass for Sunday of the 22<sup>nd</sup> Week in Ordinary Time, Year C | August 30, 2025, A.D.**

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

My dear brothers and sisters in Christ: It is good for us to be here today for this Mass and Rite of Installation of Father Bruce Scott as Pastor of Holy Family Parish here in Decatur.

Although Father Scott officially began his new assignment here as Pastor of Holy Family Parish earlier last month on July 1<sup>st</sup>, we celebrate this Rite of Installation liturgically today not only to ask God's blessings on Father Scott as he begins his ministry as shepherd of this flock, but also because it reminds all of us of an essential part of being a disciple: Disciples do not choose their own path, they follow Christ where He leads them. The word apostle comes from the Greek word *apostolos*, which means "one who is sent out as a messenger." Bishops are successors of the apostles, and priests are collaborators with the bishops. As a successor of the apostles, I was sent here as Bishop of this Diocese in 2010 by then Pope Benedict XVI, himself having been given his authority as Pope after Christ gave it to St. Peter when He founded the Church: "Whatever

you bind on earth shall be bound in heaven; and whatever you loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven" (Matthew 16:19).

In a similar way, as a collaborator in the ministry of a successor of the apostles, a priest is *sent* and *entrusted* with the pastoral responsibilities of a parish by his bishop, and it is during the rite of installation that we celebrate here this evening that this handing over of the "keys of the kingdom" (albeit only a small part of Christ's Kingdom) takes place.

At the same time, Jesus' gift of responsibility and authority over His Church as entrusted to Peter, and my giving a part of that to your new pastor today, is not something that happens only to the Pope, or to priests. *Every one of us* has been entrusted with a small part of Jesus' Kingdom. For some of you, that is upholding Christ's reign in your family, as you work, or among the people you are friends with. For all of us, Christ has given us the responsibility, and dignity, of caring for and protecting His Kingdom *in our own hearts*.

One of the ways that we do this happens every Sunday when we profess our faith by praying the Creed. For Saint Peter Himself, it was only after his profession of faith in Jesus as "the Christ, the Son of the Living God" that he was made leader of the Church. Today, in a special way, all of us, with your new pastor, will recite the Creed, professing individually and together our

common faith in Christ. By that profession, I officially ask your pastor to take on the responsibilities of this parish with the heart of Christ. But every time we profess the Creed, every time we *pray* those words that billions of Christians have prayed down through the centuries, we each renew our own commitment to Jesus! Does He reign over our hearts? Is He the Lord of our *time*? Of our *bank accounts*? Of those He has entrusted to our care? If Jesus is truly Christ the King, then He *must be the only king of our lives*, and that should be evident in the way we live.

Of course, our prayer together this evening is not just a recommitment to the Lord, it is also to give thanksgiving and worship to God, who daily provides for us. Before officially installing your new Pastor, we offer thanks and gratitude to God for Father Mark Tracy, who has served as your Pastor for the past four years. We wish him well and ask God's blessings on him now as he begins his new ministry as Pastor of Christ the King Parish in Springfield.

I now thank Father Bruce Scott for his own fidelity to the Lord and obedience to me in saying yes to this new assignment as your Pastor of Holy Family Parish here in Decatur.

Bruce Scott was born in Paris – that would be Paris, Illinois, not France! He is the son of Richard and the late Mary Beth Scott, and has two siblings, of

which he is the eldest. He attended Paris Community High School and Holy Redeemer College. He worked for over 20 years as an EMT/paramedic at a local hospital and has also done factory work, home health and other odd jobs. While he was married, he applied to the permanent diaconate program in 2014, however his wife, Joy, died in September of 2016 after a long illness. He says that “after a long journey through grief and discernment,” he was ordained a permanent deacon on June 26, 2021. The formation team and I as his bishop suggested that he think and pray about becoming a priest, and he agreed to discern that call at St. Meinrad Seminary and School of Theology. It was my privilege to ordain him to the priesthood on May 25, 2024. In his first year as a priest, he served as Parochial Vicar at Saint Francis Solanus Parish in Quincy, Illinois, and as Parochial Administrator there while the pastor was on medical leave after suffering a heart attack and having coronary bypass surgery. He enjoys fishing and spending time with his children and grandchildren.

Father Bruce Scott will serve you now as pastor as we continue forward into this Third Millennium of Christianity, so I think it is fitting to call to mind a theme suggested by our late Holy Father, the Great Pope Saint John Paul II, in his Apostolic Letter, *Novo Millennio Ineunte*, “On Entering the New Millennium,” which I quote as follows (nos. 30-31): “First of all, I have no

hesitation in saying that *all pastoral initiatives must be set in relation to holiness.*"

I always mention that quote in my homily at the Installation Mass for every new Pastor that I have appointed. Even if you have heard it before, it is worth repeating because it is so basic and essential: *All pastoral initiatives must be set in relation to holiness.* If we forget that, it will not take long to stray off course from what we should be doing in parish ministry and why we are doing it.

Holiness consists of following Jesus as His disciples, as people who listen and learn from Him, and who put Him first in our lives. In a real relationship with Christ, we discover that everything we have was first a gift from our Heavenly Father.

Saint Peter wrote of this realization and consequent conversion in these words: "As each one has received a gift, use it to serve one another as good stewards of God's varied grace" (1 Peter 4:10). This is why *stewardship* naturally flows from the authentic *disciple*. We cannot help but make return to the Lord of all the good things He has done for us.

In his Inaugural Mass in Saint Peter's Square on May 18, 2025, for the beginning of his Pontificate, Pope Leo XIV said, "Brothers and sisters, I would like that our first great desire be for *a united Church, a sign of unity and communion, which becomes a leaven for a reconciled world.* In this our time, we still

see too much discord, too many wounds . . . For our part, we want to be a small leaven of unity, communion and fraternity within the world. We want to say to the world, with humility and joy: Look to Christ! Come closer to Him! Welcome His word that enlightens and consoles! Listen to His offer of love and become His one family: *in the one Christ, we are one.*"

In today's Gospel passage from Saint Luke (Lk 14:1, 7-14), Jesus tells a parable about the need for true humility. He has noticed the Pharisees' tendency to take the places of honor and sees this as symptomatic of their pride – their belief that they are more important than everyone else. The name "Pharisee" means "separated one," and they do see themselves as an elite group. The parable speaks of the embarrassment that comes to the prideful when they are escorted from the higher to the lower seats at a banquet. Also, when Jesus speaks of inviting poor people to a meal, He wants us to shift our focus away from ourselves. In this way we will be truly exalted in the eyes of God and others, just as we hear in today's first reading.

So, what does all this mean for us today? Well, each of us is confronted with a choice. Do we choose to follow God, or are we led along by the culture of our time and place? Do we accept the hard teachings of Jesus, or do we seek to satisfy our selfish desires? Do we choose truth and goodness, or do we allow

our hearts to succumb to the evil and darkness of this world? We do not merely make this choice once in our lives. We make this choice day by day and moment by moment.

Now, your parish has already begun following Christ as disciples and stewards, so when Our Lord comes to us again today in this Eucharist, each of us is invited into an even more complete following after Him. Jesus asks your new pastor for trust, for courage, and for prayer in continuing God's mission in this parish. But your pastor cannot do this alone; he needs the commitment and cooperation of all of you. Today it is my joy to join you all in our worship of God and to receive the gift of His Son in this Eucharist. I pray that all of you will work with Father Bruce Scott in seeking to be intentional disciples of the Lord and generous stewards of the gifts entrusted to us for the growth of the Church as we journey together toward our inheritance in the glory of Heaven. Therefore, dear parishioners of Holy Family Parish here in Decatur, I urge you to strive for holiness, to work and pray with your new pastor. Support him, help him, pray for him, and most of all, love him as he loves you and as Christ calls us to love each other.

May God give us this grace. Amen.