

**Homily for Corpus Christi Mass and Procession and the
Fifteenth Anniversary of the Installation of
Most Reverend Thomas John Paprocki as the
Ninth Bishop of Springfield in Illinois**

**Cathedral of the Immaculate Conception
Springfield, Illinois**

June 22, 2025

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

My dear priests, deacons, and brothers and sisters in Christ:

The origin of today's solemn feast of the Body and Blood of Christ, known in Latin as *Corpus Christi*, is found in the night upon which Jesus gave this precious gift to His Church - that is, the night of the Last Supper: Holy Thursday. Because this falls within the great Triduum of Easter, the Church felt impelled to have a particular day upon which we should stop and reflect more deeply upon this gift of the Eucharist. It is said that the feast of *Corpus Christi* began to be observed in what is now Belgium in 1246. It was extended to the universal Church by Pope Urban IV in 1264 in order to strengthen belief about Christ's Real Presence in the Eucharist. A Dominican friar, Thomas Aquinas, wrote beautiful prayers and hymns to adorn this feast with imagery and devotion.

This year's celebration of *Corpus Christi* concludes the three-year Eucharistic Revival here in the United States. The mission of the Eucharistic Revival was "to renew the Church by enkindling a living relationship with the Lord Jesus Christ in the Holy Eucharist."

Here in the Diocese of Springfield in Illinois, we held our Diocesan Eucharistic Congress with 5,000 people at the Bank of Springfield Convention Center on October 28, 2023. The National Eucharistic Congress was held in Indianapolis last July, with 60,000 people of all ages from every diocese in the United States gathered at the Lucas Oil Stadium in Indianapolis to worship our Risen Lord in the mystery of the Eucharist.

In the weeks preceding the National Eucharistic Congress, Eucharistic processions came across the country from the four corners of the United States to converge in Indianapolis. The western leg started in San Francisco and came through our diocese from July 8th to July 12th, coming into our diocese from Belleville into Collinsville, and then continuing across our diocese with stops in Alton, Quincy, Girard, Springfield, Effingham, and Teutopolis, before continuing on to Indianapolis.

Following the National Eucharistic Congress last summer, the “Year of Going Out On Mission” took place through Pentecost of 2025. The goal was to foster an increase not only in appreciation for the Real Presence of Jesus Christ in the Eucharist, but an increase as well in the number of people attending Mass every Sunday. We pray that these efforts with the help of the Holy Spirit will have enkindled a missionary fire in the heart of our nation as we reconsecrated ourselves to the source and summit of our faith.

Today on this Solemnity of *Corpus Christi*, we have the opportunity after Mass to show our love for Our Lord in the Eucharist, as we join Catholics all over the world in the ancient tradition of carrying the Blessed Sacrament in procession, not only as a sign of our common faith, devotion, and adoration of Christ’s Real Presence in the Eucharist, but also as a witness to the fact that Christ is also present in our world. He does not remain hidden in the tabernacles of our churches, but comes with His love into our lives, into our very hearts and souls, each time we receive Him in the Eucharist.

Today also marks the Fifteenth Anniversary of my Installation as the Ninth Bishop of Springfield in Illinois. In my homily on that day, June 22nd, 2010, I said that when I was named a bishop by Pope John Paul II in 2003, I

chose as my Episcopal motto the Latin phrase: *Lex Cordis Caritas*, which in English means, “The Law of the Heart is Love.” Yes, I am a student and a practitioner of the law, but a wise lawyer like St. Thomas More helped me to recognize that the law of the heart is love. Sacred Scripture teaches this clearly. In chapter 31 of the Book of Jeremiah, the prophet tells us that God has written His law on our hearts. In chapter 13 of the Letter to the Romans, St. Paul says that love is the fulfillment of the law. To depict this visually, my coat of arms has two scales of justice to reflect my background in civil law and canon law, but above them both is the Sacred Heart of Jesus. On the cross, from His heart, He poured out for us His unconditional love and divine mercy.

The Preface for the Feast of the Sacred Heart of Jesus, which we will celebrate this coming Friday, says: “For raised up high on the Cross, [Christ] gave himself up for us with a wonderful love and poured out blood and water from his pierced side, the wellspring of the Church’s Sacraments, so that, won over to the open heart the Savior, all might draw water joyfully from the springs of salvation.”

So, as I said fifteen years ago, I see my primary task as bishop is to love you, more precisely, to radiate Christ's love with the help of God's grace throughout the twenty-eight counties of central Illinois that comprise the Diocese of Springfield in Illinois. I came to our state capital not as a sort of Catholic lobbyist, but as a shepherd of souls. But for me to radiate Christ's love also means to proclaim His truth, since if we seek to love as He did, then we must do our best to act as He did and do everything we can to make sure that our deeds conform to His divine will to love. Pope Benedict XVI made this connection between love and truth the focus of his encyclical letter, *Caritas in Veritate* ("Charity in Truth").

In my Installation homily, I spoke of one of my favorite movies, *Chariots of Fire*, which tells the story of Eric Liddell. He was known as the "Flying Scotsman" and he was the projected winner of the men's 100-meter race at the 1924 Summer Olympics. But when Eric Liddell discovered that the trial runs were scheduled for a Sunday morning, he bowed out of the race. Even the Prince of Wales could not persuade him to honor his country by running on the Sabbath. Liddell explained his decision, saying, "God my

King is greater than the kings of England, Wales and Scotland. To honor God is more important than to honor the king of England.”

Eric Liddell served as a missionary in China because he was driven to share the joy of honoring God. Because he was a missionary as well as a talented athlete, Eric Liddell had a keen awareness of God’s primary importance in our lives. He observed that “God makes kings, and the rules by which they govern. And those rules say that the Sabbath is His. And I for one intend to keep it that way.”

In the movie, *Chariots of Fire*, Eric Liddell speaks the most memorable line. It is also an inspiring line, so I taped it next to my bathroom mirror to inspire me when I look at it. Eric Liddell tells his sister, “I believe that God made me for a purpose, but he also made me fast. When I run, I feel God's pleasure.”

We feel that same pleasure when we fulfill the purpose for which God made us. I said fifteen years ago and I still believe with all my heart that it is God’s will for me to be here. Serving as the Bishop of Springfield in Illinois, I feel God’s pleasure.

The second major task that I see for a Catholic bishop is to be the center of unity for the Christian community. Here, I take inspiration from Springfield's most famous citizen, Abraham Lincoln. In his famous "House Divided" speech given on the floor of the Illinois Hall of Representatives just down the street from here in the Old State Capitol on June 16, 1858, Mr. Lincoln quoted the Bible [Mark 3:25, Matt. 12:25, Luke 11:17] in reminding people that a "house divided against itself cannot stand." Years later, as sixteenth President of these United States, President Lincoln would make the preservation of the Union his primary focus and his lasting achievement for this great nation.

So also, a bishop must make every effort to be a sign of unity among all Christians and solidarity among all the peoples of this world.

Over the past fifteen years, I have visited the towns and parishes of central Illinois and have met many of the wonderful people of this diocese. As you have heard on occasions such as my administering the Sacraments of Confirmation and First Holy Communion, it is my custom on such special occasions for me to sing a song in my homily. So I would like to revisit the song I sang to conclude my inaugural homily in Springfield.

This song is by Brian Littrell, who achieved success as the lead singer for the Back Street Boys. Brian Littrell got his start in vocal music as a boy singing in his church choir. He now writes and performs Christian music, and he has written this song called, "Jesus Loves You." This sums up my whole message as a bishop.

All my life I've heard Him say

(Choir: Jesus loves you!)

I dropped down on my knees to pray

(Choir: Jesus loves you!)

I asked Him to come into me

(Choir: Jesus loves you!)

From Him He gives eternity

(Choir: Jesus loves you)

Yes He does

(Choir: Jesus loves you)

Say yes He does

(Choir: Jesus loves you)

Yes He does ...

For the Bible tells us so

You need to look inside yourself

(Choir: Jesus loves you!)

You can't take with you all your wealth

(Choir: Jesus loves you!)

He will give to you an inner strength

(Choir: Jesus loves you!)

He walked on water but you will sink

(Choir: Jesus loves you)

Yes He does

(Choir: Jesus loves you)

Say yes He does

(Choir: Jesus loves you)

Yes He does ...

For the Bible tells us so

Said He's the One that died for me

(Choir: Jesus loves you!)

And that's the reason I believe

(Choir: Jesus loves you!)

And He has done the same for you

(Choir: Jesus loves you!)

So watch and see what He can do

(Choir: Jesus loves you)

Yes He does

(Choir: Jesus loves you)

Say yes He does

(Choir: Jesus loves you)

Yes He does ...

For the Bible tells us ... so

May God give us this grace. Amen.