

**Homily for Knights of Columbus Hall of Fame Mass and Banquet
Saturday Evening Anticipated Mass for the
Commemoration of All the Faithful Departed (All Souls' Day)
November 1, 2025**

**Saint Michael the Archangel Church
Sigel, Illinois**

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

Reverend Fathers, deacons, esteemed members of the Knights of Columbus, my dear brothers and sisters in Christ, it is good that we are here as we give thanks and praise to almighty God at this Mass, together with the Springfield Diocesan Chapter of the Knights of Columbus. Hall of Fame Mass.

After Mass this evening, the Springfield Diocesan Chapter of the Knights of Columbus host their 42nd Annual Bishop's Dinner and Hame of Fame Induction Ceremony, at which we will be honoring six brother Knights from throughout the diocese by inducting them into the 2025 Hall of Fame class for all their contributions to their council, their parish, and their community. Their love of Jesus Christ and His Church has moved them to share their time and energy to support the many good works of mercy undertaken by the Knights, works which are very much at the heart of the Gospel way of life. For this, we honor them and we thank them

Later this evening, the Toronto Blue Jays and the Los Angeles Dodgers will play Game Seven of the World Series to determine the championship of Major League Baseball. As in other major sports, the quest for a championship is the ultimate sign of success for a team in any given season. Even if the winner did not have the best regular season record, they are still recognized as the best team because of their triumph when the stakes were the highest.

As far as individual success goes, the ultimate honor for a baseball player or other athlete is to be inducted into the Hall of Fame, a distinction which recognizes a career marked by excellence and achievement. Being inducted into the Hall of Fame is an opportunity for the individual to celebrate, as well as providing an opportunity for family, friends, and fans to join in that celebration as a sign of their gratitude for the contribution that player has had on the game.

Every year on November 1st, the Church turns her attention to her own version of the Hall of Fame as we celebrate the Solemnity of All Saints. We recognize all of those members of the Body of Christ who have entered into that place of greatest honor in the glory of Heaven. The concept of the Hall of Fame, whether it be baseball, or another sport or activity, offers

several parallels that can help us to see the significance of the feast day in the life of the Church. At the same time, there are many differences which highlight the unique nature of this concept of our faith known as the communion of saints.

Just as with the Hall of Fame in sports, the saints who are in Heaven are those who have excelled in their career as disciples of Jesus Christ. The saints are those who have used the gifts given to them for the benefit of the Church and the world, just as the skill of athletes benefit the teams of which they are a member.

Just as with the Hall of Fame, there is a process involved in recognizing certain individuals for their heroic virtue and witness to the faith. The Church's recognition, similar in a way to a Hall of Fame induction, takes place at the canonization, during which the Church confirms that the saint is indeed in Heaven. These celebrations are a cause for great rejoicing for the entire Church, and they often draw thousands of the faithful who join in that celebration.

Even though there is a formal process for recognizing that a saint is indeed in Heaven, the process is not like the Hall of Fame where the person is voted in by a committee. It is Christ, the Eternal Judge, and He alone

who elects to welcome one of His servants to be in Heaven with Him. As a result of that, there are saints in Heaven of whom we are unaware. In the vision of Heaven recorded by St. John in the Book of Revelation, he speaks of a “great multitude, which no one could count, from every nation, race, people, and tongue” (Revelation 7:9). Those saints whom the Church has recognized formally are but a portion of those who have been elected by Christ to share in the victory of eternal life in Heaven.

There is another key difference that exists in the analogy of the Hall of Fame and Heaven. When it comes down to it, the Hall of Fame is limited in whom it would consider for acceptance. Children, for example, are not really candidates for many versions of the Hall of Fame, usually because they have not developed the skills or had the experience to make a significant impact. In Heaven, there no doubt is a multitude of children who, though only on earth for a short time, have been found worthy to be among the great saints who did remarkable things.

One final point of comparison with the Hall of Fame is that the entrance into that place of recognition comes at the end of a journey, one that has often involved much hard work and several stumbles along the way. Athletes are usually only considered for the Hall of Fame after

retirement, when the person is no longer physically capable of continuing to play the game. This is also the case with the saints. They do not enter into Heaven until they have “retired” from this life, when their earthly bodies can no longer continue and death has arrived.

There is a significant difference, however, that is of great importance for our understanding of the communion of saints. Unlike athletes who are no longer able to do great things in their sport after their retirement, those who have left this earthly life for Heaven do not suffer the same fate. In fact, once they are in Heaven, they are able to be far more effective after that so-called retirement from this life than ever. In Heaven, the saints are not limited by their bodies, or even by space or time, thus giving them the freedom to do remarkable things for us who remain here on earth.

As one of the prefaces for the funeral Masses for the Dead reminds us: “Indeed for your faithful, Lord, life is changed not ended.”¹ Our relationship with those who have passed away endures past death, and our bond with those who are in Heaven is stronger than ever. Their great love for us and their desire to have us join them in Heaven prompts them to intercede before God day and night for our needs. It is humbling to think how good the Lord is in granting us so many intercessors to aid us in our

journey. It is good for us to call upon them regularly, those we know by name, and those we don't, trusting that they hear us and ask God for what we are most in need of in order to advance closer to our destiny in Heaven.

As we continue this Mass, we come to the altar which unites us to the Church throughout the world. We are also united through the Eucharistic sacrifice with those who have gone before us and are already in Heaven. Finally, we are united with those in Purgatory who await their entrance into Heaven after their purification. While we pray for them in a special way at this anticipated Mass for All Souls Day and throughout the month of November, we remember those Poor Souls at each Mass and our prayers for them are our greatest gift to them. Let us desire to receive the Eucharist with greater love and fervor so that we may be strengthened by that gift, along with the prayers of the saints in Heaven, so that at the end of our life, we may be welcomed by the Lord into their company in Heaven to rejoice for the rest of eternity.

May God give us this grace. Amen.

¹ Roman Missal, Preface I for the Dead.