

**Homily for the Installation of Father Carmen Scuderi, OFM,
as Pastor of Saint Rose of Lima Parish, Montrose, Illinois
Mass for Monday of the 27th Week in Ordinary Time, Year 1 – Memorial of Saint Bruno
October 6, 2025**

**† 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 this evening for this Mass and Rite of Installation of Father Carmen Scuderi, OFM, as Pastor of St. Rose of Lima Parish, Montrose.

Although Father Carmen officially began his new assignment here as Pastor of Saint Rose of Lima Parish last month on August 15th, we celebrate this Rite of Installation liturgically today not only to ask God's blessings on Father Carmen 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 Dat Hoang, OFM, who served as your previous Pastor. We wish him well and ask God's blessings on him now as he begins his new ministry outside the Diocese of Springfield in Illinois.

I now thank Father Carmen Scuderi for his own fidelity to the Lord and obedience to his Provincial Minister and me in saying yes to this new assignment as your Pastor of Saint Rose of Lima Parish here in Montrose.

Carmen Scuderi was born on August 19, 1952, made his Solemn Profession as a Franciscan Friar on July 31, 1982, and was ordained to the priesthood on June 4, 1983. He has served in various ministries in Ohio, Indiana, Pennsylvania, and Wisconsin.

Father Carmen 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 first reading (Jonah 1:1 – 2:2, 11), Jonah, the central character in this imaginative and prophetic narrative, received a divine word, directing him to go to the city of Nineveh to deliver God’s judgments to its wayward people. Because Jonah is reluctant to do this, he boards a ship headed for Tarshish. He is soon tumbled and tossed by a great wind, a storm that God

supposedly conjured up to teach him a lesson. After the sailors petition Jonah's God to spare their lives, they do as Jonah requests: They hurl him overboard into the sea. The storm subsides, leaving the sailors even more frightened by the power of Jonah's God, who, however, has compassion on him. His life is spared when a big fish swallows him up and then, after three days and nights, spews him out onto the shore. The story of Jonah's three days in the fish is seen as a symbolic precursor to Jesus' death and resurrection, as noted by Jesus Himself when He said, "for just as Jonah was three days and three nights in the belly of the great fish, so will the Son of Man be three days and three nights in the heart of the earth" (Matt 12:40).

In today's Gospel passage from Saint Luke (Lk 10:25-37), there is an exchange between Jesus and a lawyer that links one's love of God to one's neighbor. This lawyer asks Jesus a question and receives from Him a counter question that elicits a further response from the lawyer. That response reiterates the command to love found in the Torah. Jesus responds by commanding the lawyer: Do what the law says. Not being totally satisfied with the response received, the lawyer picks up on Jesus' earlier response and presses him further. Who does or does not belong to God's people? In other words, who is deserving of love as expressed by the Torah?

Jesus' parable answers the debate for the lawyer and also sheds light on the characters of the priest, the Levite, and the Samaritan. The priest and the Levite, steeped in Torah, should have responded to the beaten man, but they did not. A Samaritan who has no connection to Jewish law comes to the aid and becomes a "neighbor" to the injured man. Jesus' last question and command make clear that knowing mercy is one thing, but practicing it is quite another.

So, what does all this mean for us today? Well, each of us is confronted with a choice. Will we love our neighbor in need as the Samaritan did, or do we seek to satisfy our selfish desires? Do we choose truth and goodness, or do we allow our hearts to succumb to apathy and the darkness of this world? We do not make this choice merely 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 Carmen Scuderi 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 Saint Rose of Lima Parish here in Montrose, 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.