

**Homily for the Mass for Couples Married Fifty Years or More
Cathedral of the Immaculate Conception, Springfield, IL**

Mass for the 25th Sunday in Ordinary Time (Year C) | September 21st, 2025 AD

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

Reverend Fathers and Deacons, and my dear brothers and sisters in Christ: It is good to be with you to celebrate this Mass for Couples Married Fifty Years or More. I commend all of you on celebrating your commitment to one another for more than half of a century. Congratulations especially to those who are celebrating their Golden Wedding Anniversary this year. Your fidelity is a wonderful witness to the entire Church of the beauty of the vocation of matrimony and is a symbol of the love that Christ has for His Church.

In a world marred by violence, the love of husband and wife as lived by our married couples here for fifty years or more provides a much-needed example of how people can live together in peace and harmony. Recent events point dramatically to the need for our world to overcome hatred with love and violence with peace.

On the morning of August 27, 2025, two children, ages 8 and 10, were killed, and 17 people were injured in a shooting that took place at Annunciation Church in Minneapolis, Minnesota.

On Wednesday, September 10, 2025, Charlie Kirk was assassinated while speaking at Utah Valley University. Sadly, the aftermath of his death has seen a barrage of postings on social media seeking to assign blame for this tragedy on various political factors and some even celebrating it. My intention today is to do neither. Instead, I believe the truly appropriate response is to express remorse for his murder, extend condolences to his family, and pray for the repose of his soul and for an end to such violence.

Both of these shootings have been described as defining moments or as turning points in our society. I would say that is true, but the question is: what is being defined and to what are we turning?

Violence and assassinations unfortunately are nothing new in our society. Here in the land of Lincoln, we are well aware of how his assassination 160 years ago on April 15, 1865, was a defining moment and a turning point for our country. Just six days earlier, on April 9, 1865, the American Civil War, having claimed the lives of up to three-quarters of a million people, effectively came to an end when Confederate General Robert

E. Lee surrendered to General Ulysses S Grant. Just eight months later, slavery in the United States officially ended with the ratification of the Thirteenth Amendment on December 6, 1865.

I learned about assassinations when I was a young boy. Our family home was on Cermak Road in Chicago. I learned that the name "Cermak" came from the late Anton Cermak, who served as Mayor of Chicago from 1931 until his death in 1933. He was killed by Giuseppe Zangara, whose likely target was President-elect Franklin D. Roosevelt, but Cermak was shot instead after a bystander hit the perpetrator with a purse. As reported in the *Chicago Tribune*, President-Elect Roosevelt, who had just completed a short talk to the crowd and who had lingered to greet Mayor Cermak, "took Cermak in his own car to the hospital and remained there until he had full information of Cermak's condition." As Mr. Roosevelt sat by the mayor's side, Cermak said: "I'm glad it was me instead of you."¹ Cermak died a few days later on March 6, 1933.

When I was in 6th grade, President John F. Kennedy was assassinated on November 22, 1963. The world certainly seemed to change after that event. The late 1950's and early 1960's were a time of relative stability. In fact, the years of the Kennedy presidency were often compared to the idyllic times of

legendary Camelot. After his assassination, our society deteriorated into periods of chaos, protests, mob riots, and more assassinations. Reverend Martin Luther King, Jr. was assassinated on April 4, 1968. Senator Robert F. Kennedy was assassinated on June 5, 1968. On December 8, 1980, the musician and singer with the Beatles, John Lennon, was shot and killed.

On March 30, 1981, President Ronald Reagan was shot and wounded in Washington, D.C. Just a few weeks later, on May 13, 1981, Pope John Paul II was shot and wounded in St. Peter's Square in Vatican City. Thanks be to God, they both survived these assassination attempts. More recently, as we recall, Donald Trump was shot and wounded on July 13, 2024, while speaking at an open-air campaign rally near Butler, Pennsylvania.

On a larger scale, nearly 3,000 people died in the terrorist attacks on September 11, 2001, at the World Trade Center in New York and the Pentagon in Washington, D.C.

My point in recounting all these shootings and acts of terrorism is that violence is nothing new. In fact, the Bible tells us that Cain, the son of the first human beings, Adam and Eve, "attacked his brother Abel and killed him" (*Genesis 4:8*). But we need not let this violence define us. As Christians, we are

called to live as Jesus did. We must turn to Jesus, the Prince of Peace, and as His followers, we must be disciples of peace.

Saint Paul describes well in his first Letter to Timothy (1 Tm 2:1-8) how Christians are expected to live together in peace and harmony. As we heard in our second reading today, Saint Paul says, “Beloved: First of all, I ask that supplications, prayers, petitions, and thanksgivings be offered for everyone, for kings and for all in authority, that we may lead a quiet and tranquil life in all devotion and dignity. This is good and pleasing to God our savior ... It is my wish, then, that in every place the men should pray, lifting up holy hands, without anger or argument.”

So I ask for prayers, that we may not lose hope in the face of multiple tragedies, that our world will turn to Jesus and be defined by the Christian way of life, that our faith in God’s love may remain strong, and that all people will learn to live in peace.

May God give us this grace. Amen.

¹ <https://chicagology.com/notorious-chicago/antoncermak/>