

**Homily for the Third Sunday of Lent - Cycle A
St. Casimir Church of Mother of the Americas Parish
Chicago, Illinois**

March 7, 2026

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My dear brothers and sisters in Christ:

It is good to be here for this Mass at Saint Casimir Church of Mother of the Americas Parish. Although the readings and prayers for this Mass are for the Third Sunday of Lent, we also acknowledge that this Mass is taking place just a few days after the commemoration of Saint Casimir on March 4th. As such, it is good for us to reflect on the life of Saint Casimir and the legacy he left as an example for us to imitate.

Miło jest być tutaj na tej Mszy w kościele świętego Kazimierza w parafii Matki Ameryki. Chociaż czytania i modlitwy podczas tej Mszy dotyczą trzeciej niedzieli Wielkiego Postu, uznajemy również, że msza odbywa się zaledwie kilka dni po upamiętnieniu świętego Kazimierza czwartego marca. Dlatego warto zastanowić się nad życiem świętego Kazimierza i dziedzictwem, które pozostawił jako wzór do naśladowania.

Es un placer estar aquí para esta misa en la Iglesia de San Casimiro de la Parroquia de la Madre de las Américas. Aunque las lecturas y oraciones de esta misa son para el tercer domingo de Cuaresma, también reconocemos que esta misa tendrá lugar apenas unos días después de la conmemoración de San Casimiro el cuarto de marzo. Por ello, nos conviene reflexionar sobre la vida de San Casimiro y el legado que dejó como ejemplo para que imitemos.

Saint Casimir has been an important figure in my life since the day I was baptized here at Saint Casimir Church just nineteen days after I was born. I attended Saint Casimir Grade School, made my First Confession here and received my First Holy Communion in this church when I was in fourth grade. I received the Sacrament of Confirmation in this church when I was in sixth grade. After I was ordained as a priest at Mundelein Seminary on May 10, 1978, I returned to celebrate my First Mass as a priest right here in this church on May 14, 1978. I again returned to celebrate Mass here after I was ordained a Bishop by Cardinal Francis George at Holy Name Cathedral on March 19, 2003. So this church, dedicated to St. Casimir and now the parochial church of Mother of the Americas Parish, played a very prominent

role in my formation as a Catholic and in my vocation as a priest and now as a bishop.

Saint Casimir was born in 1461, the third of thirteen children. He was a prince of Poland, the second son of King Casimir IV and Elizabeth of Austria.

Casimir realized from an early age that his life belonged to someone else, but to a much higher King than his father. Despite pressure, humiliation, and rejection, he stood by that loyalty through his whole life. ...

It may be hard for us to imagine royal luxury as a pressure. But for Casimir, the riches around him were temptations to forget his true loyalties. Rebelling against the rich, fashionable clothes he was expected to enjoy, he wore the plainest of clothes.

Rejecting even ordinary comforts, he slept little, spending his nights in prayer. And when he did sleep, he lay on the floor, not on a royal bed. Even though he was a prince, many of those around him must have laughed and joked at his choices. Yet, in the face of any pressure, Casimir was always friendly and calm.

Though his father must have wondered about him, he must have seen and admired Casimir's strength. He showed that he misunderstood this strength when he sent Casimir as head of an army to take over the throne of Hungary at the request of some nobles there. Casimir felt the whole expedition was wrong

but was convinced to go out of obedience to his father. He could not help but feel at every step that it was disobedient to his other Father [that is, God the Father]. So when soldiers started deserting, he was only too glad to listen to the advice of his officers and turn back home. His feelings were confirmed when he discovered that Pope Sixtus IV had opposed the move.

His father, however, was furious at being deterred from his plans and banished Casimir to a castle in Dobzki, hoping that imprisonment would change Casimir's mind. Casimir's commitment to what he believed was right only grew stronger in his exile and he refused to cooperate with his father's plans any more despite the pressure to give in. He even rejected a marriage alliance his father tried to form. He participated in his true King's plans wholeheartedly by praying, studying, and helping the poor.

He died at the age of 23 in 1484 from lung disease. He was buried with his favorite song, a Latin hymn to Mary called "*Omni die dic Mariae*" which we know as "Daily, Daily Sing to Mary." Because of his love for the song, it is known as the Hymn of St. Casimir though he didn't write it.¹

Święty Kazimierz Jagiellończyk, znany powszechnie jako świętego Kazimierz, to jedna z najważniejszych postaci polskiego i litewskiego Kościoła katolickiego. Jest on nie tylko potwierdzonym historycznie królewiczem z dynastii Jagiellonów, ale także oficjalnie kanonizowanym świętym Kościoła katolickiego. ... Dokumenty historyczne, zachowane relacje świadków życia oraz źródła dotyczące cudów za jego wstawiennictwem potwierdzają nie tylko istnienie świętego Kazimierza, ale również jego wyjątkową drogę świętości, która wyróżniała go na tle innych członków królewskich rodów. W polskiej tradycji katolickiej zajmuje szczególne miejsce jako patron Litwy, Polski i młodzieży, a jego wspomnienie liturgiczne obchodzone jest czwarty marca. Jego postać jest wyjątkowa, ponieważ pokazuje, że świętość jest możliwa również w królewskich pałacach i wśród obowiązków państwowych, co czyni go przykładem dla osób sprawujących władzę i funkcje publiczne.²

Esta es una sinopsis de de la vida de San Casimiro, escrita por un autor casi contemporáneo:

La sorprendente, sincera y no engañosa caridad de Casimiro, por la que amaba ardientemente al Dios todopoderoso en el Espíritu, impregnaba de tal forma su corazón, que brotaba espontáneamente hacia su prójimo. No había cosa más agradable y más deseable para él que repartir sus bienes y entregarse a sí mismo a los pobres de Cristo, a los peregrinos, enfermos, cautivos y atribulados.

Para las viudas y huérfanos y necesitados era no solamente un defensor y un protector, sino que se portaba con ellos como si fuera su padre, su hijo o su hermano.

Tendríamos que escribir una larga historia si hubiésemos de contar uno por uno sus actos de amor a Dios y sus obras de caridad con el prójimo.

Es poco menos que imposible describir su gran amor por la justicia, su templanza, su prudencia, su fortaleza y constancia, precisamente en esa edad en la que los hombres suelen sentir mayor inclinación al mal.

A cada paso exhortaba a su padre, el rey, a respetar la justicia en el gobierno de la nación y en el de los pueblos que le estaban sometidos. Y, si alguna vez el rey por debilidad o negligencia incurría en algún error, no dudaba en reprochárselo con modestia.

Tomaba como suyas las causas de los pobres y miserables, por lo que la gente le llamaba «defensor de los pobres». A pesar de su dignidad de príncipe y de su nobleza de sangre, no tenía dificultad en tratar con cualquier persona por humilde y despreciable que pareciera.

Siempre fue su deseo ser contado más bien entre los pobres de espíritu, de quienes es el reino de los cielos, que entre los personajes famosos y poderosos de este mundo. No tuvo ambición del dominio terreno ni quiso nunca recibir la corona que el padre le ofrecía, por temor de que su alma se viera herida por el aguijón de las riquezas, que nuestro Señor Jesucristo llamó espinas, o sufriera el contagio de las cosas terrenas.³

In his encyclical on hope, *Spe salvi*, Pope Benedict wrote: “the Christian message [is] not only ‘informative’ but ‘performative.’ That means: the Gospel is not merely a communication of things that can be known — it is one that makes things happen and is life-changing... The one who has hope lives differently.”⁴

In today’s Gospel, we see Jesus making things happen in his life-changing encounter with the Samaritan woman. His message is performative, in that it brings something to life in her that has been there potentially, although only He can see it. This woman has been living in

shame, avoiding her neighbors. No woman was allowed to divorce her husband in ancient Samaria, so it is likely that she was widowed or abandoned repeatedly. There must have been a lifetime of grief and hurt in her. But Jesus is willing to welcome her and listen to her questions. He has hope and trust in her and invites her to hope and trust in his offer of “living water.” His gift of the Spirit to her allows what has been hidden in her to grow and flourish.

Saint Paul tells us that the three cardinal virtues are faith, hope and love, with the greatest being love, but it becomes clear that without faith there can be no genuine hope, and without these two there can be no lasting love. We are challenged by God to have hope in God’s saving grace, even when — perhaps especially when — we feel we do not deserve it. In God’s eyes, whatever our weaknesses, we are enough. When we open ourselves up to live in intimate relationship with Jesus, nothing can separate us from God’s love. On our own we are powerless, and we know this. With God, all things are possible.

May God give us this grace. Amen.

¹ Catholic Online / Saints and Angels: St. Casimir
https://www.catholic.org/saints/saint.php?saint_id=33

² “Święty Kazimierz – kim był, cuda, historia życia, kiedy jest święto?”
<https://wojciech.bialystok.pl/swiety-kazimierz-kim-byl-cuda-historia-zycia-kiedy-jest-swieto/>

³ Lecturas Patrísticas: 4 de Marzo – San Casimiro
<https://liturgiacatolica.org/lectura/Casimiro.html>

⁴ Pope Benedict XVI, Encyclical Letter, *Spe Salvi*, On Christian Hope, November 30, 2007, n. 2
https://www.vatican.va/content/benedict-xvi/en/encyclicals/documents/hf_ben-xvi_enc_20071130_spe-salvi.html