

**Homily for the Installation of Reverend Father Thaddeus (Teddy) Adukus as
Pastor of Sacred Heart of Mary Parish, New Berlin, Illinois;
Visitation of the Blessed Virgin Mary Parish, Alexander, Illinois;
Sacred Heart Parish, Franklin, Illinois; and
Saint Sebastian Parish, Waverly, Illinois**

Mass for the Third Sunday of Lent, Year A | March 8, 2026, A.D.

**† 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 today for this Mass and Rite of Installation of Reverend Father Thaddeus (Teddy) Adukus as Pastor of the Quad Parishes of Sacred Heart of Mary Parish, New Berlin, Illinois; Visitation of the Blessed Virgin Mary Parish, Alexander, Illinois; Sacred Heart Parish, Franklin, Illinois; and Saint Sebastian Parish, Waverly, Illinois.

Although Father Teddy officially began his new assignment here as Pastor of the Quad Parishes earlier last month on February 2nd, we celebrate this Rite of Installation liturgically today not only to ask God's blessings on Father Teddy 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 morning 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 Adam Zawadzki, who has served as your Pastor for the past three years. We wish him well and ask God’s blessings on him now as he begins his new ministry as Pastor of Our Saviour Parish in Jacksonville.

I now thank Father Teddy Adukus for his own fidelity to the Lord and obedience to me in saying yes to this new assignment as your Pastor of the Quad Parishes of Alexander, Franklin, New Berlin, and Waverly.

The primary reason for reassigning Father Adam Zawadzki and Father Teddy Adukus at this time is the untimely deaths of two of our priests last November who were very active in their ministries, leaving us in a position of needing to replace them immediately rather than wait for our usual time for transfers in July. Father Joe Ring died on November 20th at the age of 66 due to complications following heart surgery. He was Pastor of Our Saviour Parish in Jacksonville, which includes a grade school, a high school, and prison ministry at Jacksonville Correctional Center. Father Adam Zawadzki was transferred from the Quad Parishes to be Pastor in Jacksonville, where he previously served as Parochial Vicar. Hence, Father Teddy's assignment to replace Father Zawadzki at these four parishes.

Just one week after the death of Father Ring, Father Daren Zehnle died unexpectedly early on Thanksgiving morning, November 27th, at the age of 47 after suffering a massive stroke. He was Chaplain and Director of Campus Ministry at Quincy University and served in various diocesan ministries. Our

diocese mourns the deaths of these fine priests and asks for your prayers for the repose of their souls.

Thaddeus Idanosi Adukus was born on February 2, 1962 and was ordained a priest on September 7, 1991, for the Diocese of Auchi, Nigeria. After serving in various parishes, he attended Nigerian Law School and became Solicitor and Barrister of the Supreme Court of Nigeria in 2002. He served as Chancellor of the Diocese of Auchi in Nigeria from 2003 to 2007. In 2005, he was appointed Mission Representative for the Diocese of Auchi to the United States of America, serving as Parochial Vicar at St. Philip Neri Church in Bronx, New York, from 2005 to 2007, then as Parochial Vicar at St. Benedict Church, Bronx, New York, from 2008 to 2011. Father Teddy completed his First Unit of Intensive Clinical Pastoral Education at Westchester Medical Center in Valhalla, New York, in 2010 and served his Residency at Christiana Care Health System in Newark from 2011 to 2012. Father Teddy came to our diocese in 2013, serving as Chaplain at Memorial Medical Center in Springfield from 2013 to 2016. During that time, he was in residence at Blessed Sacrament Parish in Springfield. After returning to his home diocese in Nigeria for a couple of years, Father Teddy returned as Chaplain at Memorial Medical Center from 2018 to 2024, with residence at Little Flower Parish in Springfield from 2018 to

2023. He served as Parochial Administrator at St. James Parish in Riverton from 2023 to 2026, with a brief assignment as Temporary Parochial Administrator at St. Paul Parish in Highland last year.

Father Teddy Adukus 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 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.”¹

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. 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.

So, what does all this mean for us today? Well, each of us is confronted with a choice. Do we choose to follow God, or are we led along by the secular culture of our time and place? We do not merely make this choice 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 Teddy Adukus 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, 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.

¹ 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