

29<sup>th</sup> SUNDAY OF ORDINARY TIME – A (October 22, 2023)

To begin with, I want to say how glad I am to be back here with you. I also need to tell you that I picked up a doozy of a head cold and a scratchy throat this past week. I suspect you'll hear lots of evidence of that; my apologies in advance...

First of all, I did have a great time on retreat at New Melleray Abbey—the Trappist monastery about 15 miles southwest of Dubuque. This monastery was established in 1849 when a number of monks from Melleray Abbey in Ireland came to this country. These monks devote their lives primarily to prayer—they gather in the church seven times a day for prayer, and Mass is celebrated at 8 a.m. after Morning Prayer. Those on retreat there and the general public as well are able to take part in Mass and those other prayer times. The first of those daily prayer times is 4:30 a.m. Let me repeat: 4:30 a.m. Let's just say that I managed to not hear the bells calling the monks to prayer at that time!

It was a wonderful week—time for prayer, reading, and walking outside on beautiful, cool fall days with a few times of light drizzle (probably when I picked up my cold). There was also time for rest, and I was especially grateful for that. It was time for quiet and stillness—no TV or radio, and my cell phone is not a smartphone, so I wasn't on the internet. It was good to be reminded that we don't always have to be plugged into the whole world 24/7. And I had a delightful surprise: one of my fellow retreatants was a former parishioner of mine from St. Ed's in Waterloo—I had come to know him and his wife and family quite well when I was there, and it was my joy to baptize some of his children. It was great to connect with him again.

All in all, I'm very glad for the chance to have had a few restful days away...and, I'm very glad to be back home here with you again.

Our second reading today is from St. Paul's first letter to the Thessalonians which begins with assurance of his constant prayers for them and his gratitude for their acceptance of the gospel which he had preached to them. Paul reminded them that they came to that acceptance not simply by hearing the words he spoke to them, "but also in power and in the Holy Spirit and with much conviction." This is so important for us to remember—the spread of the gospel in those earliest years of the Church's life and work was first and foremost the work of the Holy Spirit that had come down on the apostles at Pentecost.

That same Spirit has been the primary means by which the Church has, from its beginning at Pentecost, been able to spread the good news of Jesus Christ throughout the entire world and continues to do so. Jesus wanted to involve us mere mortals in his work, despite our faults and failings—which in itself demonstrates that the success of that preaching is due to the Holy Spirit's presence and power and not mainly through human effort alone.

The bishops of the Church—the successors of the apostles—have a uniquely important role in that preaching and teaching task. And, as you know, Archbishop Zinkula—our new local chief shepherd—was formally installed in that office this past Wednesday. I heard that there were some major technical glitches in attempting to livestream that Mass; I was sorry to hear of that. I understand that a video of that Mass will be available on the archdiocesan website in the near future; I'll certainly give you the details when I know them.

I did take a break from my retreat to be there, and it was a really glorious celebration. It was held at Nativity Church in Dubuque—the largest church in Dubuque for seating capacity (it can hold about

1000 people), and it was jam-packed. The formal act of installation took place at the beginning of Mass. Bishop Pates introduced Cardinal Christophe Pierre, the apostolic nuncio (you might say ‘the pope’s ambassador to the United States’). Cardinal Pierre then read the decree from Pope Francis formally naming Bishop Zinkula as the new Archbishop of Dubuque. That decree was then carried around the church and shown to all, after which our new archbishop was the main celebrant for the rest of the Mass which was celebrated as usual.

When a priest is first named to be a bishop, one of his first tasks is to decide on his motto—a brief phrase from Scripture, prayer, or other spiritual source that is part of his coat of arms. When Fr. Zinkula was named bishop of Davenport in 2017, he chose the Latin phrase “fiat voluntas tua” which means “thy will be done”—obviously from the “Our Father” that Jesus taught his apostles. That will continue to be his motto as he begins serving as our new archbishop. Desiring above all else to know and to do the will of God is at the very heart of what it means to be a true disciple of Jesus Christ. Our new archbishop chose his motto very wisely, and it truly describes what he is all about. Please pray daily for him that the Holy Spirit will continue to guide and direct him to know and do God’s will for him as our new archbishop.