

**Homily for the Pastoral Visit Mass at the
Dominican Monastery of Mary the Queen,
Girard, Illinois**

Eleventh Sunday of Ordinary Time - Year A

June 14, 2026

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

My dear brothers and sisters in Christ,

As your Bishop, it is good to be with you for my Pastoral Visit to the Dominican Monastery of Mary the Queen here in Girard, Illinois.

The scripture passage that we just heard from the Gospel according to Saint Matthew (Mt 9:36 – 10:8) starts out, “At the sight of the crowds, Jesus’ heart was moved with pity for them because they were troubled and abandoned, like sheep without a shepherd.”

The people are troubled and abandoned, so Jesus declares that more laborers are needed to care for the abundant harvest. Jesus soon meets this challenge by calling and commissioning His Twelve Apostles. The significant aspect of the calling of the Twelve Apostles is that Jesus gives them the authority to do the same things He has been doing in His mission work. He gives them authority over unclean spirits, and He gives them the power to heal those suffering from illnesses. This focus of Jesus’ ministry emphasizes His compassion.

This past Thursday evening, the Vigil of the Solemnity of the Sacred Heart of Jesus, I joined the Bishops of our country in the Consecration of the United States of America to the Sacred Heart of Jesus at the Basilica of the National Shrine of Mary, Queen of the Universe in Orlando, Florida. This was done in conjunction with this year's national celebration of the 250th anniversary of the signing of the Declaration of Independence.

The Solemnity of the Most Sacred Heart of Jesus is always celebrated on the Friday of the week following the Solemnity of *Corpus Christi*, the Body and Blood of Christ, which we celebrated last Sunday. There is a close connection between these two Solemnities, not only in the liturgical calendar, but also in their spiritual significance.

One of the ways that we know someone is alive is if he has a heartbeat. The Most Sacred Heart of Jesus is indeed alive because Our Lord's heart beats with love for us. Yesterday was the commemoration of the Immaculate Heart of Mary. As Jesus is both human and divine, He shares with us the love of His Sacred Heart that He received from His heavenly Father and from Mary, His earthly mother, and He asks us to share that love with others in our everyday lives.

The roots of devotion to the Sacred Heart of Jesus can be traced back 2,000 years ago to Our Lord's holy wounds, in particular to the sacred wound when the side of Jesus was pierced by one of the soldiers as Jesus was dying on the cross. Devotion to the Sacred Heart of Jesus grew over the centuries in various religious communities, including the Dominicans, and among individual lay Christians.

In 1353, Pope Innocent VI instituted a Mass honoring the mystery of the Sacred Heart. Subsequent Popes have also written and spoken eloquently about the Sacred Heart of Jesus. Pope Pius IX declared the Sacred Heart of Jesus an obligatory feast in 1856. Pope Leo XIII decreed in 1899 that the consecration of the entire human race to the Sacred Heart of Jesus should take place on June 11, 1899. He also encouraged the entire Roman Catholic episcopate to promote the First Friday Devotions, established June as the Month of the Sacred Heart, and included the Prayer of Consecration to the Sacred Heart. Pope Leo XIII called this "the great act" of his pontificate.

On May 15, 1956, on the occasion of the 100th anniversary of Pope Pius IX's institution of the feast, Pope Pius XII issued an encyclical letter with a lengthy instruction on the devotion to the Sacred Heart.

On June 11, 1999, the Solemnity of the Sacred Heart of Jesus, Pope St. John Paul II marked the 100th anniversary of the consecration of the human race to the Sacred Heart of Jesus with a letter in which he wrote, “The consecration of the human race in 1899 represents an extraordinarily important step on the Church’s journey and it is still good to renew it every year on the feast of the Sacred Heart. . . . The words of Leo XIII still ring true: ‘We must have recourse to Him who is the Way, the Truth and the Life. We have gone astray and we must return to the right path; darkness has overshadowed our minds, and the gloom must be dispelled by the light of truth; death has seized upon us, and we must lay hold of life’ (*Annum sacrum*, n. 11).”

On May 15, 2006, Pope Benedict XVI sent a letter to Father Peter Hans Kolvenbach, the Superior General of the Society of Jesus, on the 50th anniversary of Pope Pius XII’s encyclical, reaffirming the importance of the devotion to the Sacred Heart of Jesus.

The last encyclical letter of Pope Francis before his death was on the theme of the Sacred Heart of Jesus. Issued on the 24th of October of 2024, the encyclical letter bears the title in Latin, *Dilexit nos*, which means, “He loved us,” as Saint Paul says of Christ in his *Letter to the Romans* (cf. *Rom* 8:37). Pope Francis wrote, “The symbol of the heart has often been

used to express the love of Jesus Christ. . . . In the end, that Sacred Heart is the unifying principle of all reality.”

Last year on the Solemnity of the Sacred Heart of Jesus, just weeks after his election as our new Holy Father, Pope Leo XIV said in his homily, “In the solemn Mass inaugurating my Pontificate, I voiced before the People of God my great desire for ‘a united Church, a sign of unity and communion, which becomes a leaven for a reconciled world’ (18 May 2025). Today, I share this desire once more with all of you. Reconciled with one another, united and transformed by the love that flows abundantly from the Heart of Christ, let us walk together humbly and resolutely in his footsteps, firm in faith and open to all in charity. Let us bring the peace of the risen Lord to our world, with the freedom born of the knowledge that we have been loved, chosen and sent by the Father.”

Following the Creed and the Prayers of the Faithful, the most solemn part of the Mass begins. Bread and wine are brought in procession to the altar, and with them we offer our own work and life to God. We are invited to lift up our hearts and then, with all the hosts of Angels, we cry out, and without end we acclaim: Holy, Holy, Holy Lord ...” Through the words of consecration and the power of the Holy Spirit, the living God is present on the altar and comes into our hearts in Holy Communion,

providing us with a foretaste of heaven, to which we look forward with great hope to share in that final heavenly banquet with God and all the saints forever.

May God give us this grace. Amen.