

# The Catholic Bishop, the Cathedral and the *Cathedra* in the Missionary Life of the Church

The Installation of Fr. Michael Duffy as Rector of St. Agnes Cathedral

Homily of Bishop John Barres

St. Agnes Cathedral

October 25, 2020



When we gather for Mass, we come *to love the Lord with all our heart, with all our soul, and with all our mind*. We come to worship God. We come to hear His Word. We come to be strengthened and set afire by His Body and Blood. At this particular Mass, we come, too, with joy to celebrate the Installation of Fr. Michael Duffy, a relentless, non-stop Catholic priest evangelizer, as the new Rector of St. Agnes Cathedral.

Since his arrival in August, our cathedral-parish has quickly discovered Fr. Duffy to be an exceptional young priest. Like his predecessors, he is filled with the Joy of the Gospel, the Light of Christ, and compassionate pastoral charity. He is committed to the Splendor of Truth of Catholic teaching and the Spiritual and Corporal Works of Mercy. He is a champion of Catholic Education and the *Morningstar Initiative*. He is devoted to our young people.

He is *un campeón y un amigo de la comunidad hispana aquí en esta parroquia, nuestra catedral* – the vibrant community led so faithfully by Fr. German Villabon. And crucially, he is dedicated to being an instrument of holiness and mission for the people he serves so zealously. He is already promoting vocations to the priesthood and religious life. As his enthusiasm, many gifts, and priestly heart meet the generosity, goodness, and faith of the people of St. Agnes, exciting things are bound to happen with grace-filled ripple effects in every parish of the Diocese. May God bless the growth!

Together, we support Fr. Duffy with our prayers, and we thank him for his pastoral leadership and charity. In a special way, we welcome Fr. Duffy's family and friends who are present today.

As we install a new rector for St. Agnes, it is fitting to contemplate and celebrate the Cathedral's past. We remember the arc of God's providence and the many people woven into the tapestry of this Cathedral-parish: popes, bishops, rectors, priests, and parishioners, as well as people from every parish in the Diocese who have been part of the Cathedral's bold Catholic missionary spirit.

To honor this rich history, I am using the chalice of Msgr. Peter Quealy at today's Mass. As you know, that Irish-born priest came to Rockville Centre in 1905 to serve as pastor of a fledgling St. Agnes, and with leadership, vision, and a steady commitment to his priestly vocation, the parish grew exponentially under his care. Perhaps the greatest testament to that growth was the construction of this magnificent Norman-Gothic church in 1935, which became our Cathedral in 1957.<sup>1</sup>

Msgr. Quealy served as pastor and then as rector of St. Agnes Cathedral from 1905 to 1959 – long enough to have a street named after him! Fr. Duffy: that type of tenure would bring you to 2074!

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As at any installation in the life of the Church, be it for a bishop or a pastor, this day we survey the past, hope for the present, and look with confidence to the future. The day rightly turns our minds to a wider vista.

This being the case, this day, in this place, it is appropriate to reflect on something which might be overlooked in the busyness of parish life, but which sets this church apart from all others in our Diocese, namely, the Bishop's Chair or *Cathedra*, where I sit, is vital to a Bishop's servant-ministry, and which makes this church our Cathedral. Allow me to reflect on these points of our Faith - the *Cathedra* and Cathedral - and do so by beginning with the person with whom they are associated, the Bishop, a Successor of the Apostles.

As Catholics we believe in the doctrine of Apostolic Succession, namely, that there is an unbroken line through the centuries from the first Apostles chosen by Christ to the Bishops of today, a line which assures the Church a "communion of faith and

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<sup>1</sup> See Sr. Joan de Lourdes Leonard, CSJ, *Richly Blessed: The Diocese of Rockville Centre 1957-1990*, published by the Diocese of Rockville Centre, 1991, 12-17.

life with her origin.”<sup>2</sup> As Christ was sent as the Father’s Emissary, so Our Lord in turn sent others to continue his mission, and they chose others to succeed themselves. The Scriptures make this clear. By this gift of God, the Church “was and remains built on ‘the foundation of the Apostles.’”

The *Catechism of the Catholic Church* teaches that “with the help of the Spirit dwelling in her, the Church keeps and hands on the teaching, the ‘good deposit,’ the salutary words she has heard from the [ones first chosen].” Further, through the gift of Apostolic Succession, “[the Church] continues to be taught, sanctified, and guided by the apostles until Christ’s return, through their successors in pastoral office: the college of bishops, ‘assisted by priests, in union with the successor of Peter, the Church’s supreme pastor.’” (857)

Bishops stand in line with the Apostles, but what is the role of the Bishop in the Catholic Church?

Bishops, “Successors of the Apostles (*Apostolorum Successores*) by divine institution...are constituted as Pastors of the Church when the Holy Spirit is conferred upon them at their episcopal ordination, and they receive the task of teaching, sanctifying and governing in hierarchical communion with the Successor of Peter and with the other members of the Episcopal College...

The title ‘Successors of the Apostles’ lies at the root of the pastoral ministry of the Bishop and of his mission in the Church and it clearly defines the figure of the Bishop and his mission. Bishops, as members of the episcopal College which is the successor of the Apostolic College, are intimately united to Jesus Christ, who continues to choose and to send out his Apostles. As a successor of the Apostles, by virtue of his episcopal ordination and through hierarchical communion, the Bishop is the visible principle and the guarantee of unity in his particular Church...

As successors of the Apostles, Bishops receive the grace and the responsibility to safeguard the mark of apostolicity in the Church. In order that the living Gospel might always be preserved in its entirety in the Church, the Apostles left Bishops as their successors, entrusting to them their own Magisterial task. This is why Bishops, generation after generation, are called to safeguard and to hand on Sacred Scripture and to promote the *Traditio*, that is the proclamation of the one Gospel upon the new questions that are constantly presented by changing historical circumstances...

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<sup>2</sup> *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, 863.

Bishops, moreover, are responsible for sanctifying and governing the People of God *cum et sub Petro*, with missionary dynamism...”<sup>3</sup>

The depth of these words about the life and ministry of a Bishop are revealed especially when we contemplate the Bishop and the Cathedral. Indeed, Pope St. John Paul II makes a powerful connection between the Bishop’s threefold ministry of sanctification, teaching and governance and the Cathedral in his 2003 Apostolic Exhortation *Pastores Gregis*. He says: “The Cathedral is the place where the Bishop has his Chair, from which he teaches his people and helps them to grow through his preaching, and from which he presides at the principal celebrations of the liturgical year and in the celebration of the sacraments. Precisely when he occupies his Chair, the Bishop is seen by the assembly of the faithful as the one who presides *in loco Dei Patris*... It is the presence of this Chair which in fact makes the Cathedral Church the physical and spiritual center of unity and communion for the diocesan presbyterate and for all the holy People of God.”<sup>4</sup>



The Bishop, “the first steward of the mysteries of God in the particular Church entrusted to him, is the moderator, promoter and guardian of her whole liturgical life.”<sup>5</sup> This is especially evident when he presides at liturgical celebrations in the Cathedral, and particularly at Mass, “since it is in the Eucharist that the sacrament of the Church is made fully visible...[and] in his presiding at the Eucharist that the Bishop’s ministry is most evident.”<sup>6</sup> Indeed, “the Eucharist celebrated by the bishop has a quite special significance as an expression of the Church gathered around the altar, with the one who represents Christ, the Good Shepherd and Head of his Church, presiding.”<sup>7</sup>

We could not celebrate Fr. Duffy’s Installation as the Rector of St. Agnes Cathedral without both deepening and rekindling our Catholic theological and liturgical beliefs concerning the Bishop as a Successor of the Apostles, and the central role of the Cathedral and the *Cathedra* in the missionary life of the Church. These doctrinal

<sup>3</sup> Congregation for Bishops, *Directory for the Pastoral Ministry of Bishops*, (Rome: Libreria Editrice Vaticana, 2004) 5-6.

<sup>4</sup> Pope John Paul II, Apostolic Exhortation *Pastores Gregis*, October 16, 2003, 33.

<sup>5</sup> *General Instruction on the Roman Missal*, 22; *Sacrosanctum Concilium*, 41; *Redemptionis Sacramentum*, 19.

<sup>6</sup> *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, 1142.

<sup>7</sup> *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, 1561.

truths serve as catalysts of evangelization and are critical to Fr. Duffy's role as Rector of St. Agnes Cathedral.

For as Rector, Fr. Duffy, you have the responsibility of ensuring that all liturgies in the Cathedral, especially those at which the Bishop presides, serve as models for the Diocese and as examples of active participation by the people. Let the liturgies here "manifest the mystery of the Church" and not be "a mere display of ceremony."<sup>8</sup> We all express our gratitude to the Catholic Faith Network which brings our Masses and our commitment to reverent and beautiful worship to many parts of the country.

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In today's Gospel, our Lord summarizes the Law, and in so doing, he offers a straightforward path to holiness: "Love the Lord, your God, with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your mind...love your neighbor as yourself."

We see so deeply in this Matthew 22 passage the connection between Catholic Worship, the Corporal and Spiritual Works of Mercy, the Gospel of Human Life and Catholic Social Justice teaching.

Loving God is inseparably tied to loving neighbor. Christ makes this clear, and the saints manifest this truth in their lives. They are icons of the Gospel. Look simply to the stories of those saints present in our Cathedral: St. Elizabeth Ann Seton, whose statue is in the nave, or St. Thomas More, patron of Statesmen and Politicians, St. Vincent de Paul or St. Jeanne Jugan who are present on our baldachin. They loved God, they loved their neighbor, and they knew that one love flowed from the other. They knew that it is precisely because the Holy Spirit *helps us* to "love the Lord with all our hearts, souls and minds" that *we can* love our neighbors as ourselves. They knew with St. John the Beloved that, "We love because [God] first loved us" (1 John 4:19).

In his recent encyclical, *Fratelli Tutti*, Pope Francis laments the lack of neighborly love in the world today. He notes the "dark clouds" that loom above us, he sees, as well, "paths of hope" in the midst of our brokenness, and he stresses the need for fraternity and friendship. (54)

In a poignant section of his letter, the Holy Father reflects on the parable of the Good Samaritan.<sup>9</sup> This parable shatters our narrow understanding of being neighbor and

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<sup>8</sup> *Ceremonial of Bishops*, 12.

<sup>9</sup> See also Pope Benedict XVI's exceptional analysis of the Good Samaritan parable in *Jesus of Nazareth*, (New York: Doubleday, 2007), 194-201.

reveals its universal dimension. It shows that we are to love everyone. The Pope's exposition of the characters in the parable - the robber, the victim, the priest, the Levite, the Samaritan – offers a multitude of starting points for prayer.

Among those reflections, the Holy Father highlights an often-overlooked character – the innkeeper, the one who received the victim - the man left for dead - and cared for him. The innkeeper worked *with* the Samaritan, and their working in tandem reminds us of the necessity of loving our neighbor *together*, “as a family that is stronger than the sum of small individual members.” (78)

The Church is precisely this: She is a family, and she “offer[s] herself as a family among families.” Pope Francis reminds us of this familial identity, and he tells us, too, that the Church must be “a home with open doors, because she is a mother.” (276)

We are called to be a place where everyone can meet the Lord who is *compassionate* (Exodus 22:26) and worship Him, *the living and true God*, with all their heart, mind, and soul (1 Thes. 1:9). We desire to be a home where the love of God can be met, and then, with Pope Francis and “in imitation of Mary, the Mother of Jesus, we want to be a Church that serves, that leaves home and goes forth...to be the sign of unity...to build bridges, to break down walls, to sow seeds of reconciliation.” (276) We want to be a people who cast off dark clouds and sow paths of hope.

Reflecting this day, as we have, on the Cathedral and the importance of its liturgical life, let us never forget that it is the Eucharist, the Sacrament of Charity and Unity, which heals the brokenness of our human nature. It is in the Eucharist where we are most clearly the family of God.

Let every parish, but especially our Cathedral and its celebration of the Sacraments with the Bishop, be that home and open door to unity and restoration. Let our parishes be places of encounter, where our human brokenness can be healed and renewed by “the source and summit of the Christian life” (*Lumen Gentium* 11). Let our parishes be places where we love God and neighbor and walk the path to holiness. Let our parishes be places where we become saints.

## RESUMEN DE LA HOMILIA DEL OBISPO BARRES EN ESPAÑOL

**25 de octubre del 2020**

Cuando nos reunimos para la Misa, venimos *a amar al Señor con todo nuestro corazón, con toda nuestra alma y con toda nuestra mente*. Venimos a adorar a Dios. Venimos a escuchar Su Palabra. Venimos a ser fortalecidos e incendiados por Su Cuerpo y Su Sangre. En esta Misa en particular, venimos también con alegría a celebrar la Instalación del P. Michael Duffy como nuevo rector de la catedral de Santa Inés.

Desde su llegada en agosto, nuestra parroquia-catedral ha descubierto rápidamente que el P. Duffy es un joven sacerdote excepcional. Como sus predecesores, está lleno con la Alegría del Evangelio, la Luz de Cristo y la caridad pastoral llena de compasión. Está comprometido con el Esplendor de la Verdad de la enseñanza católica y las Obras de Misericordia Espirituales y Corporales.

Es un ferviente defensor de la Educación Católica y el énfasis decisivo de la Iniciativa “Estrella de la Mañana” para que muchas más familias católicas hispanas en Long Island sean parte de la experiencia de la Educación Católica. Se dedica con devoción a nuestros jóvenes.

Él es *un campeón y un amigo de la comunidad hispana aquí en esta parroquia, nuestra catedral* - la vibrante comunidad dirigida tan fielmente por el P. German Villabon. ¡Está emocionado con nuestro nuevo portal web de la Red de Fe Católica - CFN en Español!

Y espera que nuestras hermosas comunidades parroquiales hispanas en todo Long Island vengán con frecuencia a orar en su Iglesia Madre, la Catedral de Santa Inés, ¡su casa!

Y está dedicado de manera especial a ser un instrumento de santidad y misión para la gente a la que sirve tan celosamente. Él está ya promoviendo vocaciones al sacerdocio y la vida religiosa y se comprometerá también a hacerlo en nuestra comunidad hispana tan evangelizadora.

En la medida en que su entusiasmo, sus muchos dones y su corazón sacerdotal se encuentren con la generosidad, la bondad y la fe de la gente de Santa Inés, grandes cosas van a suceder con un efecto multiplicativo de la gracia hacia cada parroquia de la Diócesis. ¡Que Dios bendiga el crecimiento!

Apoyemos todos juntos al P. Duffy con nuestras oraciones y le agradecemos su liderazgo pastoral y su caridad. De manera especial, le damos la bienvenida a la familia y amigos de P. Duffy que están hoy aquí presentes.

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En el capítulo 22 del Evangelio de Mateo, escuchamos a Nuestro Señor decir: "Amarás al Señor, tu Dios, con todo tu corazón, con toda tu alma y con toda tu mente ... Y amarás a tu prójimo como a ti mismo".

Vemos tan claramente en este texto la conexión entre el Culto Católico, las Obras de Misericordia Corporales y Espirituales, el Evangelio de la Vida Humana y la enseñanza de la Justicia Social Católica.

Reflexionando en este día, como lo hemos hecho, sobre la Catedral y la importancia de su vida litúrgica, recordemos que la Eucaristía, el Sacramento de la Caridad y la Unidad, sana el quebrantamiento de nuestra naturaleza humana. Que cada parroquia, pero especialmente nuestra Catedral y su celebración de los Sacramentos con el Obispo, sea ese hogar y la puerta abierta a la unidad y a la restauración.

¡Que nuestra Catedral sea también una puerta abierta a la Reforma Migratoria Integral en los Estados Unidos de América y que el Arzobispo San Oscar Arnulfo Romero interceda por nuestros esfuerzos para hacer que esto sea una realidad en el ámbito público!

Que sea un lugar de encuentro, donde nuestro quebrantamiento humano pueda ser curado y renovado por “la fuente y cumbre de la vida cristiana” (*Lumen Gentium II*). Hacerlo así nos ayudará a implementar y vivir la encíclica del Santo Padre *Fratelli Tutti* en nuestras vidas. Nos hará uno, no solo con el Santo Padre, sino también con las Iglesias Cristianas y todo el género humano.