

Homily  
June 26, 2022  
80<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of Dedication of OLL Church  
29:20-39:25

Letter from Archbishop Thompson:

Greetings in our Lord Jesus Christ the Cornerstone,

Congratulations to you and the parishioners of Our Lady of Lourdes parish as you celebrate the 80<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the dedication of the church. It is a grand and beautiful edifice built to glorify God. Marking such an occasion, one cannot help but ponder all that has transpired in our Church and world since the dedication of Our Lady of Lourdes church on June 21<sup>st</sup>, 1942.

No doubt throughout the course of these 80 years, the church has stood as a great beacon of faith and hope, while the parishioners have given great witness to the Good News of Salvation in Jesus Christ. Since the time of dedication, the priests, staff and parishioners of Our Lady of Lourdes parish have faithfully carried out the mission entrusted to the Church through proclamation of the Word, celebration of the Sacraments and outreach of service. Indeed, there is much to remember, honor and give thanks.

I especially implore the intercession and inspiration of Saint Bernadette on all who gather to mark the church's 80<sup>th</sup> anniversary of dedication. With assurance of my prayers, gratitude and best wishes for you and everyone associated with Our Lady of Lourdes parish, I remain sincerely yours in Christ.

Charles C. Thompson.

It was nice of him to do that for us.

Look around. Look up. Look to the side. Look forward.

It is a beautiful edifice, fashioned of stone, hardwoods, Kankakee sandstone, stained glass. Eighty years ago, incense, holy water, the lighting of candles began the life within this place. Everything that is done to us: holy water in baptism, the lighted candle, the fact that we're incensed on a regular basis, the anointing with Chrism – everything – was done to this building 80 years ago, which tells us something about the nature of the building and its first focus.

It's the gathering home of God's people. Not only Our Lady of Lourdes parish, but anyone who comes to visit. In fact, our Second Reading makes it very clear that the Church, according to St. Paul in 1 Corinthians, was known as the *ecclesia*. That is, the "body of believers". Eventually in history, that word in German became *kirche*. And then our word, *church*, to describe the building and the institution. But its beginning was about the body of believers. It is the body of believers gathered together in solidarity with our bishop, our priests, our deacons, the religious – all of us together – that give the name to these places that we call "church".

Eighty years ago. Well, the church was not really completed at that time because there was no organ up there. (points to choir loft) There may have been a little console. But if you go over to St. Bernadette Hall, you'll find a picture of the choir loft and all there is is the choir and a flag. It was the star that denoted during World War II that a family had someone serving in the military. And this parish did. And so it had the star.

I kind of wonder at times what Father Moore, the pastor who built this place, was thinking that day. I wonder if he was as excited as Solomon in our First Reading, who praises God and thanks God for what God has allowed him, a servant of the people, to do – to raise up the Temple in Jerusalem. But notice, it's not just about him, Solomon. It's about the people who will gather in this place to worship God, to praise God, to seek God's favor. And while they do that they also, as always, recall God's gracious mercy, his pardon.

Now, Solomon had artisans to build. Father Moore himself was an artisan. Do you see our tabernacle? He hand-carved that. At least the decorations on it. He was a woodworker, as well as a pastor. So I wonder that day how full his heart was to know that he helped to fashion not only this house, but that very special place where the Presence of God lives constantly.

Look around. Look at the Stations. The ceiling, which basically reminds me of the ark – Noah's ark – upside down. The beautiful windows in the Chapel. Some of us call it the Mary Chapel. Some of us call it the Bernadette Chapel. I just call it the Chapel. But if you look at those windows, they tell stories of the past in Mary's life. And if you look up at the ceiling here, (gesturing toward the sanctuary) you see symbols of all the Sacraments. And there's so much more. There's so much detail on the outside as well.

Each of these are reminders of God's goodness to God's people in the past. We are connected to those folks – First Century forward. And what we have done here for the last 80 years is connected to our real lives. From blessing a pregnant mother, to a Baptism. To First Communion. Confirmation. The celebration again and again of the Eucharist. The lifting up of praise in song. I could go on and on. All of

these moments, even up to the Funeral liturgy, the ending of this life into the next, all here in this place. This holy place.

The Lord intersects our lives. What are we to do with it? The Gospel gives us a clear message. It is not about brick or stone, or a temple in Shiloh, or a Temple in Jerusalem. The Lord Jesus says, “no.” Ultimately we are to worship in the Spirit – God’s Spirit and Truth – and we are called to do that.

How? By lifting up what’s in our lives. By lifting up others in our lives. By listening intently to God’s Word. By paying attention to the needs of one another. By praying together. By celebrating Eucharist, receiving Eucharist – letting the very Spirit of God in Christ enter into us. And then, go out.

You notice the doors swing both ways. We come in. And we go out – not to leave behind what has taken place here together, but to carry the Spirit of it to the world again and again and again. That, my brothers and sisters is one of the great fruits of this place. Especially in the Eucharist – we go forth to live. And then we come again, bringing that life to the presence of God in this place to do it again.

It is truly a magnificent structure. It’s one of the more, if not most beautiful churches, in the Archdiocese. But ultimately, it is stone and steel and hardwoods and concrete and Kankakee sandstone. It is our home. And as beautiful as it is, as our home it helps to shape us, the people of God. May that continue to be so in the years ahead. And may we continue to be the very Body of Christ that Paul speaks of in the Second Reading – living stones – the ecclesia, the very body of believers here and in the world.