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Bishop

Diocese of Kansas City ~ St. Joseph

Homily for Consecration of Catholic Center Chapel

Kansas City, Missouri

August 15, 2011

Dear Brother Priests and Deacons
Esteemed Religious
Dear Co-Workers at the Catholic Center
Friends in Christ all,

Last Fall some of us came here to this building we had newly acquired for a Retreat Day. As part of that day we celebrated Holy Mass in this room. Today we come back in an act of holy consecration to set apart this spot – now decorated and furnished as a proper and permanent chapel. We consecrate this chapel. We wash it in the water which reminds us of our Baptism. We mark out and anoint this place – its walls and the altar - as sacred; as a place for the encounter between God and His People; most especially for the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass and for prayer to our Lord in the Blessed Sacrament.

The first reading we have heard, from the Old Testament Book of Nehemia, recalls the renewal of the temple dedication: This was a joyous time of entrance into the holy place. Ezra the priest proclaims the Word of God, the Book of the Law, and all determine that they will pledge themselves to live by this life-giving commandment. “Do not be saddened this day,” Nehemiah says, “for rejoicing in the Lord must be your strength!” So also this is a day which God makes holy, a day of joy. This will be a place where we proclaim and hear God’s Word, the efficacious Word that can reach and change our hearts. Rejoicing in the Lord, here, will be our strength.

We shall refer to this chapel under the title “Our Lady of Ephesus,” mindful of the tradition that Mary, after the resurrection of Jesus went with the Apostle John – to whom Jesus

had entrusted His Mother at the foot of the Cross – went with John on His apostolic mission to Ephesus. There according to tradition on Nightingale Mountain the beloved disciple built for our holy Mother a little house which became her place of prayer and contemplation until the time of her death and her Assumption Body and Soul into heaven. John was Bishop of Ephesus. He suffered greatly for the Gospel and would be exiled to Patmos. He would live many years announcing the Gospel and strengthening the Church.

St. Paul also came to Ephesus, as the Acts of the Apostles attests, desiring to preach in the great amphitheater which still can be seen there. He would write to the Ephesians. Knowing well the demands of the Gospel, St. Paul urges the Church at Ephesus to remain strong in the Lord, “to put on the armor of God.” He reminds us, “We are not contending against flesh and blood, but against the principalities and powers, against the darkness of the age and the evil spirits.” (6:10-12) Paul consoles the Ephesians with a prayer, “May Christ dwell in your hearts through faith; that rooted and grounded in love, you may have the strength to comprehend the breadth and length, the height and depth; to know the love of Christ which surpasses all knowledge. (3:17-19)

In the year 431, the Church would gather in Ephesus for a great ecumenical Council – the third in the Church’s history. In the basilica of Mary in Ephesus, 1580 years ago, the Council Fathers affirmed and proclaimed Mary, “Theotokos - Mother of God.” The narrative records that as far as the eye could see the Faithful stood in torchlight vigil outside the Basilica prayerfully awaiting the announcement by the Church of a mystery they already knew: Mary is Mother of us all. From that moment and forever this would be the prayer of her children: “Holy Mary, Mother of God, pray for us sinners.”

120 years ago, in 1891, French Catholic missionaries in Turkey, Vincentian Fathers and Daughters of Charity, found the place of Mary’s House in Ephesus. Sr. Marie de Mandat Grancey, a remarkably holy Religious Sister who had given up her family title of nobility and wealth to serve the sick and the poor, first in Paris, and then in Smyrna – one of the seven great Churches recounted in the Book of Revelation. Sr. Marie had read of the little house in the mystical writings of Blessed Catherine Emmerich, and urged her co-workers to help her find it. Sr. Marie was able to acquire the venerable site and saw it established as a place of pilgrimage not only for Christians but for Muslims. Today, indeed August 15 itself, is a day of pilgrimage for Muslims and Christians who come to Meryem Ana Eve, the House of Mary,

seeking the intercession and heavenly help of the Mother of Jesus, the Mother of God, and our Mother.

Popes since Leo XIII have seen in the House of our Lady in Ephesus a place of prayer, pilgrimage and peace for all children of Mary, from many diverse cultures and creeds. At that site, the Popes have granted special graces and the privilege that the Mass of the Solemnity of Mary's Assumption may be celebrated every day at Mary's House to joyously recall that dogma of the faith that tradition tells us took place on the hill beyond the House.

As you know our Diocese this past January was granted the privilege of studying the life and virtue of Sr. Marie de Mandat Grancey, Daughter of Charity and Founder of Mary's House. Sr. Marie's picture will be placed here and I invite you to ask her often for her heavenly friendship and intercession.

Finally, dear friends, what is this place which we set aside so prominently within our new home and workplace? It is the dwelling place of God. It is the beating, living heart of the building. The sacred mysteries which we commemorate here are the foundation of the charity and stewardship and service which we undertake; which you carry out every day for the love of God's people. As a group we and others will come here for Holy Mass and worship. It will also be a quiet place to come and think for a while, to renew our sense of God's love for us and for each other person we serve. Here we adore Jesus Christ who has promised to be with us always until the end of time. This becomes the hearth and the furnace which warms and fuels everything we do and are. Come often, dear friends when you have a moment to hand all over to Jesus Christ; to rediscover the breadth and length, the height and depth of God's love. Even when you remain at your desk, you will know that He is here with us and that we can think of Him and love Him Who is never far from us.

As in Ephesus, we hope others will come here – Catholics and others: Christians and non-Christians alike. God is clearly here for us all. And perhaps this place will serve as a cause of unity and a reminder to everyone that we have a Mother ever ready to help us. One of the most ancient prayers of the Church is "Sub tuum praesidium confugimus, Sancta Dei Genetrix." "We fly to thy patronage O Holy Mother of God." More accurately, "we fly ...sub tuum praesidium ... under your mantle, O Mother." We are children who, with all our needs, anxieties, and speaking any prayer whatsoever, run to our Mother and find refuge and security

under her cloak.

Thank you to all who have so generously worked to make this beautiful place possible. Many skills, hard work, spiritual and material support have helped us to this day. May God reward everyone richly for their generous help. St. John and St. Paul, pray for us. All our diocesan patrons; Sister Marie de Mandat Grancey, intercede for us. Our Lady of Ephesus, help us in what we undertake.

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Words of Introduction and Welcome

Welcome dear friends to this dedication of our chapel on the Solemnity of the Assumption of Mary. As we gather to consecrate this chapel we are mindful of many who have worked so hard to see it completed: Many of our own staff have provided administrative support for the project, particularly Dave Malanowski and our Diocesan Finance Office. Deacon Ralph Wehner and our Office of Worship.

The architect for this project was William Heyer (not able to be here). The construction was carried out under J.E. Dunn, and under the supervision of Ron Jury, Russell , and the staff of Jury and Associates. A generous grant has been made by the American Society of Ephesus, represented here today by G. William Quatman and other members of the Quatman family.

The encouragement and cooperation of the Chancery staff and the staff of Catholic Charities Caritas Center has been very important to the work.

Our music is assisted today by Katie Beyers of the Diocesan Office of Sacred Music, and by the Benedictines of Mary Queen of Apostles from the Priory of Ephesus.

Taking part in many aspects of our ceremonies will be members of the staff at the Catholic Center.

To all our pastors, benefactors, and friends – and for the privilege of serving God's people through our daily work – we are sincerely grateful.