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**Sermon for the Consecration of Old St. Patrick Church**

*Kansas City, Missouri*

October 25, 2008

Then came a loud voice from the heavenly throne, "Behold the dwelling place of God with men. ... Behold, I make all things new."

Dear friends, I greet you with great joy on this day of Solemn Consecration. This is the dwelling place of God with men. This is the place where heaven meets earth, where the mystery of salvation touches the human heart. Here, even sadness and death are given flight – so full of hope, so full of grace and light are the truths and supernatural actions that unfold in this place, where God dwells with man.

In the Gospel account of the meeting between the Lord Jesus Christ and the tax collector, Zachaeus, we see the power of conversion in the encounter with God. When the human heart receives the Lord, a saving change can transform us. Here in this magnificent church such miracles have been occurring for more than 130 years. Now, again we have set it apart as the House of God. What a happy and historic day this is in our Diocese.

It was on August 14, 2005, that I had the privilege of being able to announce to our little Latin Mass community the impending arrival of the Institute of Christ the King Sovereign Priest, the establishment of the Oratory of Old St. Patrick, and the beginning of a plan to provide a fitting home for the faithful in this historic church – the oldest Catholic church building in Kansas City. At that meeting in the hall at Our Lady of Sorrows, I told those gathered about this place. I called it "a diamond in the rough," and acknowledged that the work of restoration "would be demanding and costly." With enthusiasm and hope they accepted the challenge.

Out of a motive of true love for God and dedication to the Church you have done something great in the history of the Diocese. You have renewed this holy temple in a way that is

equal to the sacrifice and commitment of those who first built it, and which may indeed surpass its original beauty. Deo Gratias!

Three years ago this month we welcomed Father Denis Buchholz who served you as proto-Rector of the Oratory. I am very thankful to him, as I know you are, for his steadfast spiritual leadership. In the last months the new Rector, Fr. William Avis has seamlessly continued the work that has helped to hold together this small but burgeoning community.

Many have been involved with this significant effort which reaches a certain fruition today when we offer here again for the first time in several years the Holy and Saving Sacrifice of the Mass. Under the direction of the Institute of Christ the King and their Vicar General and U.S. Provincial, Msgr. Michael Schmitz, the parish committee has guided the project and so many have actively taken part in every aspect of the work. Outstanding architects and true churchmen, Mr. William Heyer and Mr. Craig Deister, have provided an inspired map for the work. So many apt workmen and dedicated volunteers – Villoti, Bartosik, Dale, Estapare, Marnett, Mishler, Silvey, Troyer, Quastler, and really so many more - have labored in various ways, and even down to the last hours, to make things ready for this morning's sacred rites. None more perhaps than Mr. Donald Deister, who with his formidable crew have offered their blood, sweat and tears to secure a worthy place for God among us. I am thankful to Msgr. Bradley Offutt, Chancellor of the Diocese, and a true friend of Old St. Patrick, for his commitment "beyond the call." For you all, this is a labor of love, and I know God receives it as an act of praise.

Such a project as we mark today also requires generous help from many, many benefactors. Mr. Joseph Faris helped to lead this part of the effort, and I thank you all who have made sacrificial gifts, and all on whose assistance the Oratory will continue to rely. May the Lord inspire the necessary means to complete and prosper this new beginning.

We are also thankful today to both the diocesan and Redemptorist priests, and the parishioners of Our Lady of Sorrows who have shared their home with the Latin Mass community for more than a dozen years. There is much to be thankful for; much to be proud of; many challenges along the way; all for God's glory; all in accord with His Providence and mercy.

Even while I know many challenges remain, I am full of confidence as I renew today my entrustment of the Oratory to the Institute of Christ the King, for whom “doing the truth in love,” is much more than an ecclesial motto – but indeed, a dynamic interior motive of outgoing apostolic love. Through Monsignor Schmitz, I express my profound thanks to Reverend Monsignor Gilles Wach, Founder and Prior General of the Institute, for his solicitude to the Diocese, in providing this spiritual foundation for our Oratory.

Now, dear friends, what will God accomplish in this place? His love and grace, alive in the Church, will be a source of supernatural aid to many individuals and, we pray, He will kindle something blessed in this neighborhood and throughout the Diocese.

I pray that this church will be a center of reverent and obedient worship in spirit and truth for all who come here. Here you will bring your babies to be baptized. Here your sins will be forgiven. Here holy matrimony will be solemnly ratified. All the sacraments will give God glory, perhaps none more than the re-presentation of Calvary at this altar.

Dear friends, may this place also be a home of reconciliation for Catholics who, within the praxis of these venerable rites, still long for a more perfect communion with the Vicar of Christ and me his unworthy servant. I welcome you. Jesus Christ the Eternal High Priest Himself seeks you out. He who came to seek and save the lost looks, searches, to see us. “Make haste and come down, Zachaeus.” And we must humbly invite him to the house of our soul as did the tax collector in whom already the transformation was beginning to take place.

Today, Dear friends, Let salvation come to this house! Let salvation be found here in the ineffable mysteries of which the Church is the one faithful and prudent steward.

There is one more precious intercession I wish to lift today. In collaboration with the Catholic bishops of Missouri, and in anticipation of a significant election, I ask all to pray; to pray and sacrifice, so that our country will be renewed in the love of human life, and that we may be spared the continuing spiral and decline of our moral sense. Let us take advantage of the singular grace of this Solemn Consecration to beg the Merciful God; to implore Mary the Lady of the Rosary, St. Patrick and St. Bridget, St. Joseph and all our heavenly patrons, to keep our country from evil and sustain on a new path of life.

In this month of Angels I ask you to join me in calling upon the Guardian Angels of 47 million babies lost to the crime of abortion in our country, to carry the cry of these Holy Innocents before the throne of Mercy: not to condemn us, but to fortify and inspire us to be the Guardians of life.

On this happy day Lord, let us not forget the responsibility that is forever ours to give back to you the obedience of our faith, to seek holiness with a pure heart, and to spend ourselves in apostolic charity. Let the faith and good will of the many find a new start here. "For this is the dwelling place of God with men." Let the voice from heaven resound in our joyful and thankful hearts, "Behold, I make all things new."