



**Most Reverend Robert W. Finn**  
**Bishop**  
**Diocese Kansas City ~ St. Joseph**

**Opening Liturgy 50th Anniversary of the Diocese**  
March 19, 2006  
Co-Cathedral of St. Joseph  
St. Joseph, Missouri

Dear Abbot Gregory,  
Dear Father Dierkes, Pastor of the Cathedral of St. Joseph,  
My brother priests and deacons,  
Esteemed Consecrated Religious men and women,  
Dear Knights and ladies representing fraternal and apostolic orders,  
Faithful of the Diocese of Kansas City-St. Joseph,  
Friends in Christ all, Our Jubilee has begun.

We lift our minds, hearts and voices to the eternal Father in a prayer of praise for His providence and love.

God has directed and sustained us these 50 years – since August 29, 1956, when Pope Pius XII established the Diocese of Kansas City-St. Joseph, and our neighbor dioceses: Springfield-Cape Girardeau and Jefferson City.

As a foundation the Almighty Father had laid a strong pier of rock in the faith of two great dioceses: St. Joseph, directed for 88 years from this place where we gather; and Kansas City, from Father Donnelly's brick church overlooking the Missouri River.

From this seat in St. Joseph, Bishops Hogan, Burke, Gilfillan and LeBlond shepherded the people of God. South of the Missouri River, Bishop Hogan would also be the first bishop of Kansas City, followed by Bishops Lillis and O'Hara.

In the sturdy shelter of these two local churches, with Jesus Christ as the cornerstone, and Peter, an immovable rock and singular sign of unity, today still, the Father of Mercies establishes through the gift of the Holy Spirit, a point of sanctification and mission, which exists to extend to one and half million souls the hope of salvation.



**You are God: we praise you;  
You are the Lord: we acclaim you;  
You are the eternal Father: all creation worships you.**

Dear friends,

May our prayer today be, first, a *Te Deum* of thanks and praise. Even during Lent, we cannot fully contain the jubilation we feel at a half century of grace.

Jesus Christ has accomplished through our collective stewardship, and at times despite the imperfection of our willfulness and waywardness, a great work of salvation.

Thanks be to God!

I have wanted to make clear in various comments about these events that our Jubilee committee, to whom I am most thankful, did not choose this Mass in St. Joseph to be for our residents here, and the December 8th celebration for faithful of Kansas City and points south. Indeed we are one today, one diocese and one local Church. I would be thankful for whatever divine help the Lord may grant to heal any vestige of hurt or separation that may endure these 50 years. That we may be one... O Lord we pray! That we may be one.

The work that God accomplishes, He does through the instrumentality of the Church, and we live with a deep sense of our connection to our Holy Father, Pope Benedict XVI and the Church throughout the world. We are likewise forever in living communion with the faithful departed and the communion of saints. Nowhere are we more intimately joined in such communion as around this altar of Christ's everlasting sacrifice.

In particular we have heavenly patrons, none higher than Blessed Mother Mary – Immaculate and ever-virgin mother and queen, and her husband St. Joseph, guardian of the Redeemer and head of the Holy Family. Our secondary patron, the 17<sup>th</sup> century Jesuit preacher St. John Francis Regis, was adopted early in the history of Kansas City.

How we need their example, their friendship, their intercession.

St. Joseph, we turn to you on this your feast day. We invoke your protection and submit to your paternal love the commencement of the next 50 years. "Noble son of the House of David; Husband of the Mother of God; Model of workers; Patron of the dying;" Pray for us O Patriarch and Foster Father. Pray for us, Immaculate Mother. St. John Francis Regis and all you saints and angels come to our aid.

On this Third Sunday of Lent, the Word of God proposes through St. Paul the image of the Cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, proof that our past and our future is guided by a supernatural wisdom.

There is no Christianity without the Cross. There is no authentic love without the total gift of self, whose most perfect image is Jesus Christ crucified.

To the world, St. Paul tells us, the crucified Christ was a stumbling block and utter foolishness. To those who are called, Christ on the Cross must come to be seen as the power of God and the wisdom of God.

In the frailty of human flesh we also see the invincible love of God made man. Contemplating the blood and water that flowed from the side of Jesus Christ on the Cross we see the meaning of God's life giving love. (Benedict XVI, *Deus Caritas Est*, no. 12)

The Lenten Gospel of the Cleansing of the Temple similarly is not vague in its implications. Our Lord zealously purges the Temple of contrary motives and misplaced materialism, signaling the deep and comprehensive purification that Lent, in particular, seeks to renew in us. Our Jubilee observance must begin with a prayer for an authentic renewal and conversion of our hearts and motives.

Pope John Paul II called for a New Evangelization. We must more clearly proclaim the truth of Christ and His Church in such a way that the confusion and relativism we find in our culture will not have safe harbor in the Church. Yes, as in every age, every woman or man will freely choose Christ or not. But, the programs of catechesis and evangelization that we offer must resonate with the Church's authentic Magisterium. Our preaching must be strengthened by our conviction to this same unanimity.

The means of social communication we employ must be similarly dependable in their fidelity. Any communications medium calling itself Catholic that emanates from the bounds of this local Church must not be party to what Cardinal Ratzinger, just days before his election as Pope called the "tyranny of relativism, that does not recognize anything as definitive and whose ultimate goal consists solely of one's ego and desires."

Friends, we will not pierce the cacophony of messages being thrust upon the world, unless we speak with one voice and accept fully our mission to echo the Church.

In the last several years the Church has called us to examine our stewardship of the Sacred Liturgy, purifying it of superficial elements that detract from the profound supernatural reality it celebrates, and safeguarding the universality of our worship. The integrity of these saving mysteries, and none more so than the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass, is the patrimony of the whole People of God, who must never be deprived of its pristine God-given power.

We must, by reason of our mission as Church, be actively engaged in the purification and transformation of our world in Jesus Christ. The separation of Church and state about which some fathers of our country wrote, cannot be a dichotomy within the human heart. We only have one heart with which we must love both Church and country, and each member of each. We can never back away from our obligation to preach the truth about God and the truth about man as revealed in Jesus Christ. The realities of marriage and family life that are at the core of human society, and the truth about the beginning of human life, and the dignity which cannot be detached from it throughout its course and unto natural death, compel us to exercise peacefully and lawfully our rights and responsibilities as citizens.

We will never deny the right of the human being to exist from the first moment of its inception, free of manipulation and experimentation. This human life must never be directly or willingly destroyed even for the perceived good of another.

We will never forsake the immigrant's primordial right to peaceably establish a home, to work and provide food, shelter, and the graces of life for their families.

We must champion the true meaning of marriage and the primacy of the family as the cradle of society, and not fail to point out the grave dangers of living active lifestyles that may well cost the soul its eternal salvation.

We will persevere in eradicating capital punishment as an unnecessary means to protect the

good of society. We will work for the peaceful resolution of global conflict, seeing war only as a last resort.

In these and many, many other ways, we must act in accord with the law of God written on the human heart, and the command of Jesus Christ as entrusted to His Holy Church. We must do it by preaching and living Jesus Christ crucified, a stumbling block and utter foolishness to many, but for us, the power of God.

Christ in His singular Lordship acted decisively to cleanse the Temple of Jerusalem of unfit abuses and contrary practices. Lent is a particularly fitting time for us to assess what is improper in our lives and, with God's merciful help, make a radical change of heart. As we stand at the threshold of a new half-century of our diocese, we acknowledge before the Lord our faults and needs. Help us cleanse our inner house, Lord, and deign to dwell with us anew in your gentle and purifying love.

Our Diocese of Kansas City-St. Joseph, now fifty years young, has been blessed with good shepherds: Archbishop O'Hara, Bishops Cody, Helmsing, Sullivan, and Boland. Bishop Boland sends his greetings and blessing today as he keeps commitments he had made in Savannah, Georgia.

I must tell you, from this vantage point, I see the strength of the Church not only in the shepherds, whose work is extended through the ministry of the clergy, and the consecration of religious men and women, but in the apostolate of the laity.

Who will accomplish this change of heart, this transformation of our world, if not you? I will try to do my part. But it is YOU, through holiness, and indeed only by union with Jesus Christ, who will change this culture of death and darkness into a Kingdom of light and life. You will do it most effectively from your homes, in your workplaces, and at the very crossroads of secular society. Don't forget that, precisely in this secular arena, ours is a supernatural task. Holiness and grace is the indispensable vehicle for this work, because it is ultimately the work of God through us.

We the Church must not shirk our vocation to be salt, light, and leaven for the world.

Dear friends,

We are the beneficiaries of a great legacy. We stand on the shoulders of the saints who have preceded us. We walk hand in hand with Mary our immaculate mother and queen, and our guardian St. Joseph, all the while our hearts are resonating with the voice of the Good Shepherd.

The Te Deum of this day goes on:

**Come then Lord, and help your people  
Bought with the price of your own blood  
And bring us with your saints  
To glory everlasting. -- Amen**