

HOMILY by Bishop Chad W. Zielinski

Mass of Installation

September 27, 2022

During the past two years, you the faithful of the Diocese of New Ulm have hounded Heaven with the prayer: **Almighty God, Who by the Holy Spirit moves the hearts of Your people, Direct the counsels of those who are appointed to choose a bishop for the Diocese of New Ulm, that we may be given a pastor who in faithfulness and wisdom shall lead Your people in the way of holiness.** God bless you in your fervent persistence in prayer.

Following a second major spinal fusion surgery this past January, I realized at the urging of my surgeon that I could no longer carry on the day to day duties of what was demanded of me to serve the good people of God in northern Alaska. So, I knew at some point I would be transferred to another diocese. So, I placed this in God's hands.

In late June this summer, Archbishop Pierre called me to tell me that the Holy Father had appointed me to serve as the Bishop of the Diocese of New Ulm. I did know that New Ulm was in rural Minnesota and comprised of numerous farming communities. Growing up in farm country in lower Michigan, I had a personal insight into what this meant. My immediate response to him was, "Archbishop this is great news, wonderful news. I am very excited to hear this and very much look forward to serving the good people of God in New Ulm. Please thank

the Holy Father.” There was silence on the phone! So, I said to Archbishop Pierre, “I bet you rarely hear that response.” He started to laugh and said, “I will pass along your enthusiastic sentiments to the Holy Father.”

As most of us these days, we want to get up to speed quickly we go to the internet and “Google it.” I went immediately to the Diocese of New Ulm website to shortly discover the Prayer for a new bishop that I just read. Honestly, this pierced me to the core of my being. Also, it jolted my memory back to 1994 when as a seminarian for the Diocese of Gaylord, I was asked to spend a summer in a Spanish language immersion course in Monterrey, Mexico. Yes, it was more than just learning the language but immersing one’s self in the culture, faith and scrumptious food. I vividly recall participating in Mass with hundreds of people and a Corpus Christi Day procession that involved thousands lining the streets to honor Our Lord in the Holy Eucharist. During all these faith gatherings, the faithful repeated this simple chant/prayer request: “Danos sacerdotes, Danos muchos sacerdotes, Danos muchos muy santos sacerdotes”; “Give us priests, give us many priests, give us many very holy priests.” I realized with a passion these people were praying for priests, holy priests. I realized that as a seminarian they wanted me to be one day, God willing, a holy priest. In time, I realized that I could not do this on my own and they certainly knew that but they were willing to accompany me in this call to holiness to be that holy priest they were praying for, and this gave me great encouragement and hope.

As I read this prayer, fervently prayed by all of you, I realized that this is what the entire people of God are asking throughout the entire Church. They are asking for holy deacons, holy priests and holy bishops. From this groaning of the Holy Spirit with stirring in their hearts and families comes a thirst for holiness.

On Nov 19, 2014 at the General audience, Pope Francis continued his catechesis on the Church and turned his reflections to our universal call to holiness which he reminded everyone is “a vocation” for every person. The Holy Father noted that this vocation flows from our baptism, and that within this call to holiness is the call to be a saint.

Therefore, holiness is discovered in full communion with God, in the fullness of his life and love,” and he continued by saying that this is lived out in the ups and downs of our daily lives.

By asking us to become aware of the many opportunities each day to grow in holiness, Christ is inviting us to experience in all things his own deep joy and to become a gift of love to all around us.” The Pope added that the call to holiness is “not a heavy burden, but rather an invitation to live each moment of our life with joy and love.”

Pope Francis continued to see and hear the groaning of the Holy Spirit in the hearts and minds of the faithful and in 2018 wrote an Apostolic Exhortation, *Gaudete et exultate*, “rejoice and be glad”, on our baptismal calling to holiness. Take a look at this!

The call to holiness is a gift from God, a thirst to draw closer to Him. One of the top desires/pastoral concerns that surfaced in the Synod process for the Diocese of New Ulm and throughout the entire US is a thirst for the Holy Eucharistic. The Catholic Church in the US has launched a Eucharistic Revival process and I truly believe this is a gift and opportunity driven by the groaning of the Holy Spirit drawing us deeper into our call to holiness.

How do we do this? During the official announcement at the Cathedral, I proposed that we focus on three ways or actions: Hear God, Hand Him Your Heart and Have Hope.

Hear God: We live in a world filled with overpowering noise, distractions. People are fueled by anger in verbal jousting matches firmly standing their ground in polarized positions, just because. “I” and “me” have become the source of all my thoughts, feelings and decision making. We have hunkered down in our own homes, hearts and minds with our ear phones plugged in and our eyes fixed on a screen. Maybe it is time to put everything in the proverbial “airplane” mode or “hear God” mode and listen.

St. Vincent de Paul, whose feast day we celebrate today reminds us: “If God is the center of your life, no words are necessary. Your mere presence will touch hearts.”

Also, we can learn from two great saints in the Gospels: Zechariah, who under holy silence at the order of an angel, sat and listened to Elizabeth and the Blessed Mother in the presence of John the Baptist and our Savior in the womb.

In Luke 5: 4, while sitting in the boat with Peter, Jesus says, “Simon, “Put out into deep water and lower your nets for a catch.” Peter having a problem with listening recalls the early mission failure.

Hand Him your heart: St. Vincent de Paul keenly reminds us of the importance of surrendering our hearts to God and the fruit this bears. “The kingdom of God is peace in the Holy Spirit; he will reign in you if your heart is at peace. So, be at peace ... and you will honor in a sovereign way the God of peace and love.” Like myself, Peter had a listening problem but in the end he did what the Lord asked him to do. In other words, he gave his heart to Jesus. He went into the deep—“Duc in Altum”! No matter what is happening in your life, where you are, how overwhelmed you are, how awful you feel, the doubts and wounds you have—hand God your heart—he wants it as it is right now. May God take each of us and this entire diocese into the deep during this Eucharistic Revival.

In doing this, like Peter, we bishops we will be first to acknowledge that at times we have not heard the voice of Christ, the cry of the faithful for a holy Church and we must fall on our knees at the feet of Jesus and your feet and say with Peter, “Lord, depart from me for I am a sinful man.” Also, in hearing the words of the Lord in the first reading from Ezekiel and honoring the holy and humble work of St. Vincent de Paul, we must have hope and trust in the Lord that he will renew and heal the shepherds uniting them every closer to the flock they are called to serve: “I myself will pasture my sheep; I myself will give them rest, says the Lord GOD. The lost I will seek out, the strayed I will bring back, the injured I will bind up, the sick I will heal...”

Have Hope: Lk 5:6-“When they had done this, they caught a great number of fish and their nets were tearing.” During the past 8 years of serving as bishop of Northern Alaska, I had the honor to join my Yupik brothers and sisters in their subsistence way of living. This is a centuries old way of life of living close to the earth, trusting God the Creator to provide for their needs.

So, one August day about 5 years ago, I had the excitement of a little kid to go on one of my first subsistence fishing trips on the mighty Yukon with Dominic Hunt (here in the sanctuary) and Pat Tam who works with the young adults in the region. We arrived at our fishing spot on the Yukon drifting with 300 feet of net and going 20+ feet deep. As we drifted, I saw the little buoys bouncing which indicated a fish was in the net. Shortly, Dominic stopped the boat and said, “It is

time to pull in the net.” Wow, oh my! Tugging, pulling, back wrenching hard work, fish slime, icy cold Yukon water numbing your hands and we put 143 fish in the tubs. I sat down exhausted and sighed. Dominic in is very quiet disposition asked, “What do you think?” I said, I am tired and that is just like bailing hay, exhausting farm work.” Dominic smiled and said nothing.

Yes, going into the deep produces in abundance, especially at the command of Jesus, but it is hard work. It is farm work in my words. Brothers and sisters of the Diocese of New Ulm. Similar to the Yupik people of the Yukon, you have been tilling land, harvesting crops, bailing hay—working until you sweat, hay chaff fills every part of your body, cow manure on your boots, you are covered in tractor grease, oil, diesel fuel for aftershave and this radiates a stench that says without words, “I feel great; that was a good day of hard work.” You know what hard work is! You today and your previous generations lived on hope and by God’s providence. You are a people of hope. I look forward to putting on my gloves and joining you in this hard work as we Hear God, Hand Him our hearts and have renewed hope in God’s providence.

As we gather in this beautiful Church today, there are many busy hands literally harvesting crops in the nearby fields. The harvest is ready! We all know the harvest is abundant and I see hard working people eager to come together, may we embrace the command of Christ in the Gospel: “So ask the master of the harvest to send out laborers for his harvest.” As the words of my brothers and sisters in Mexico continue to echo in my heart and mind we ask the Lord to make

us holy deacons, holy priests, holy bishops, holy families, holy people of God—a holy diocese that we may serve you and our brothers and sisters in need. With great joy we go forth as missionary disciples at the invitation of St. Vincent de Paul who reminds us:

“So, our vocation is to go, not just to one parish, not just to one diocese, but all over the world; and do what? To set people’s hearts on fire, to do what the Son of God did. He came to set the world on fire in order to inflame it with His love.”