



Centennial of the Founding of St. Pius V Parish

October 18, 2017

On October 15, 2017, the Parish of St. Pius V (<https://spvchurch.org/centennial>) in Providence, RI began their celebration of the Centennial of the founding of the Parish (<https://spvchurch.org/centennial>). The Very Reverend Kenneth Letoile, O.P., preached the following homily for the 28th Sunday in Ordinary Time. (<http://usccb.org/bible/readings/101517.cfm>) (An audio version is also available here (<https://soundcloud.com/spvchurch/opening-mass-of-centennial-year-homily-of-very-rev-kenneth-letoile-op>)).

Brothers and Sisters, it is a great joy for me to be with you today as we officially inaugurate the centenary celebration of the founding of St. Pius V parish. I would like to thank your pastor, Fr. Augustine Judd, for extending a gracious invitation to me to preside and preach on this special occasion. Along with all of us, it is a welcome opportunity for me to give thanks to God for calling my family to this “Holy Mountain” in 1953. For 60 years of the 100 we celebrate, my family experienced the loving care of the Good Shepherd here at St. Pius V Parish.

While today’s gospel has its challenges for this occasion, it also has a backdrop of profound beauty: the symbol of the wedding banquet. It speaks of God’s eternal desire to be united with us in a loving, intimate and life-giving union. The mysterious guest without the wedding garment (the garment is a symbol of being clothed in Christ at baptism) rejects the effusive, extravagant love of his host. Contrary to this rejection, our patron saint, Pius V, our location in

the city of Providence and our spiritual legacy as a parish and school served by the Order of Preachers, has, for 100 years enabled the parishioners of St. Pius to joyfully accept the Kings's invitation and gladly put on the Lord Jesus Christ in word and loving deed. Let's look at each.

Our Patron Saint

As we enter our church, there is a striking mosaic of St. Pius V praying the rosary for victory of the Christian forces in the Battle of Lepanto, Oct. 7, 1571. As you undoubtedly recall from my 75th anniversary homily, I wonder if the fact that our parish was founded near the end of World War I was the reason that Pope St. Pius V was the Dominican saint chosen to be our patron.

His patronage conveyed the promise of victory and peace through fervent prayer. St. Pius had asked all of Christian Europe to pray the rosary. October 7th then became the feast of the Holy Rosary, the rosary that is beautifully proclaimed in our radiant stained glass window. What our patron saint teaches us, then is the central importance of turning to God in prayer to sustain us in all the struggles, challenges and mysteries of our lives. When we do so, we experience God fulfilling his promise in today's first reading: "On this mountain he will destroy the veil that veils all peoples... He will wipe away the tears of every face." For one hundred years our brothers and sisters have followed the example of St. Pius V and have experienced in this parish a peace the world cannot give.

The City Where We Serve

Parishes are located in every corner of God's world and each setting provides its own set of gifts and challenges. (We continue to remember those whose parishes are still trying to recover from the natural disasters of recent weeks.) Ours, of course, is a city parish, which at this time makes these words of St. Paul from today's second reading apt: "I know how to live in humble circumstances; I know also how to live with abundance." St. Pius was a parish of abundance before I-95 changed the demographics of Rhode Island in the late 50s. The parish I lived in during my early years at St. Pius school had the people and resources to put twelve different kinds of Italian marble and life-sized mosaics depicting the stations of the cross in our beautiful church. After I-95 was built, suburban churches received many of those parishioners and resources. But here is an important silver lining in this demographic change. St. Paul puts it this way: "My God will fully supply whatever you need, in accord with the glorious riches in Christ Jesus." Notice, the invitees with the farm and business rejected the king's invitation. At this time in our parish's history we recognize more easily the truth of our radical dependence on the "glorious riches of Jesus Christ" and so we are eager to come in from the streets of our city so that God can gift us with the wedding garment of his Son. Isn't that what Providence means?

The Order of Preachers

For one hundred years now, Dominican friars and sisters, members of the Order of Preachers, have responded to the call of the Good Shepherd to care for the people of St. Pius Parish and school. In 1216, St Dominic, represented by this beautiful statue to my left, founded his Order

to bring the light, clarity and challenge of God's saving truth to the church of his time. All of us who wear his white habit strive to continue his mission today. But I would like to expand our usual understanding of what it means to be a preacher to include all of us, ordained, consecrated religious and laity alike, who call St. Pius our spiritual home. To broaden our call to preach, we can look to the servants in the gospel. They are the ones who make the connection between the gracious king and the potential guests. They speak the words of invitation, first rejected and then accepted. To be a Dominican parish, then, means to realize our call to serve our King by extending his invitation to all we meet. In 1988, a year before I was assigned to St. Pius, St. John Paul II wrote these words: "The lay faithful precisely because they are members of the church, have the vocation and mission of proclaiming the gospel" (*Christifideles Laici* (http://w2.vatican.va/content/john-paul-ii/en/apost_exhortations/documents/hf_jp-ii_exh_30121988_christifideles-laici.html), 33). These words do not refer to pulpit preaching, but to the reality that the laity who share in the charism of St. Dominic are called to be the bridge to Jesus' marriage banquet for those who do not know him or who have grown indifferent. We need to have the courage to raise the faith question and extend the invitation trusting that we are sent by our loving God to all of his beloved children with deeds and words of love, compassion and concern.

Conclusion

By way of conclusion, then, my prayer is that the intercession and example of St Pius V, our mission field in the city of Providence and our shared legacy in the Order of Preachers will send us forth into this centenary year with the grace to make the words of St. Paul in today's second reading our own: "I can do all things in Christ who strengthens me."



MORE NEWS & EVENTS
