

**HOMILY FOR THE ASSOCIATION OF CATHOLIC DIOCESAN ARCHIVISTS
MASS AT THE UNIVERSITY OF ST. MARY OF THE LAKE, MUNDELEIN, IL**

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Bishop of Springfield in Illinois
July 20, 2010**

My dear brothers and sisters in Christ, it is good to be with you for this Mass that we are celebrating in conjunction with your conference of the Association of Catholic Diocesan Archivists. As your Episcopal Moderator, I am pleased to be able to lead you in prayer and ask God's blessings upon you in your important work of managing the archives and records of so many of our dioceses, religious communities and other Catholic institutions.

As you know, until last month I served as a priest and then Auxiliary Bishop here in the Archdiocese of Chicago. On June 22nd I was installed as the Bishop of Springfield in Illinois, our state capital. Springfield was the home of Abraham Lincoln for over twenty years, so it is a historian's delight.

Love for history and for the people that populate history most likely is what motivates you to do the work that you do. That common interest is also what brings you together as an association. When we have a common interest or love for something, we naturally feel an affinity for others who

share this interest. We also find that we can carry on extended conversations with people who share this common interest. For me, President Abraham Lincoln is always a topic of interest. I also have sports hobbies such as hockey and marathon running. I am not by nature a very talkative person, but I can talk for hours about hockey and marathon running with others who share that interest. On the other hand, a conversation about such topics with someone who doesn't share that interest can be very short.

In today's scripture passage from the Gospel of St. Matthew, Jesus responds to the person who thought he was making a simple statement to Jesus that His family was waiting to speak to Him. Jesus responds with a short lecture about our true family members, indicating that "whoever does the will of my heavenly Father is brother and sister and mother to me." Philosopher Johann Schiller expressed this idea in these words, "It's not flesh and blood but the heart which makes us fathers and sons, [mothers and daughters]." In other words, kinship is a blood relationship, but we also think of our soul friends and our trusted companions as our brothers and sisters.

When we recall how the disciples whom Jesus called left everything behind, including their families, their homes and their jobs, in order to follow Jesus and scale the spiritual heights with him, it is only natural that Jesus would feel a great kinship toward them. Some supported Jesus and His companions by selflessly providing food, lodging and money. They also faced difficult challenges when His hard teachings drove others away. The poet Maya Angelou points out, "Sisterhood and brotherhood is a condition people have to work out."

If we want to be true brothers and sisters in Christ, we must work at it, invest our hearts in His service, and show ourselves to be trustworthy disciples who can count on being counted among Jesus' closest kin.

This sense of belonging to the Lord's family inheritance is expressed in the beautiful prayer that opened our first reading from the prophet Micah, petitioning the Lord to guide His flock to their homeland. Beaten and chastised after their long exile, the people long for restoration to their homeland, where they may once again feed in the Promised Land, as they did when the Lord originally brought them there after the exodus from Egypt and the covenant at Sinai. The Lord who liberated His people from Egypt is the same one who restores from exile.

God is then praised by the prophet's prayer for forgiving the sins of the people, whose infidelity was the just cause of exile. Because the Lord of the covenant is rich in mercy, He restores His people. God is also praised for being compassionate, as well as faithful to His unfaithful people for the sake of Jacob and Abraham, to whom God swore their descendants would dwell in the land.

All of this serves as prophecy for our lives as Christians. Despite our unworthiness, the Lord forgives us and restores us to our true homeland, which is eternal life in his heavenly kingdom. This is our promised inheritance, and we are given a foretaste of this inheritance each time we share in this Eucharist. When we eat His body and drink His blood, we indeed become members of the Lord's divine family.

May God give us this grace. Amen.