

FORMAL REMARKS

NEWS CONFERENCE

HOLY CROSS DIOCESAN CENTER

LA CROSSE, WI

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Bishop William Patrick Callahan

Good morning, everybody. I am profoundly humbled and yet, thoroughly exuberant to have been chosen as the Bishop of La Crosse. I extend my sincere gratitude and fidelity to His Holiness Pope Benedict XVI for selecting me as bishop of this most beautiful part of the Lord's vineyard. As a semi-attentive Cubs fan, I have grown up hearing commercials about local brews with pure artesian waters made here, in "God's country." Little did I dream that I would be the bishop of God's country!

But God's country it is, and the announcement of a new bishop for any diocese is cause for rejoicing and an opportunity for the local church to gather together in celebration of our unity and our identity with the Mission of Jesus Christ. I give thanks, certainly, for my predecessor here in La Crosse, Archbishop Jerome ListECKI of Milwaukee, whom I highly regard as a brother bishop and trusted friend.

I am grateful to God for the gift of faith that has matured in my life over the years and has developed into a relationship with Jesus Christ, a great love for His Church, and a deep desire to serve His people. I have been a priest for thirty-three of my sixty years and I have enjoyed every day -- every year. I am grateful to so many friends as well as to my family who have contributed to that joy and have been instrumental along the journey.

As the bishop of this diocese I look forward to sharing a life of faith with all of you. I set forth as the center piece of my ministry the words of Jesus that encourage us to "seek first the Kingdom of God." My ministry among you would be meaningless if I did not call you in beyond this world and through this world into the next—the Kingdom of God. I look forward to working with my brother priests as we celebrate the life of faith and announce in Word and sacrament the Good News of Jesus Christ.

While speaking about priests, today cannot go any further without acknowledging the Solemnity of the Sacred Heart of Jesus that we celebrate today. We remind ourselves of the words of Jesus that lead us to evaluate all things in relation to our heart's desire—where our treasure is, there our heart will be. Thus, our daily actions and our decisions must become the means by which we clearly choose Jesus Christ. He is the only rest for the weary heart. St. Augustine reminds us that our hearts cannot rest until they rest in Christ. He loves us and has given Himself for us. Today, as the Year for Priests winds down, we honor the Heart of Jesus expressed in the ministry of the priest. I truly look forward to my collaboration and ministry with our good and holy priests. On this day of prayer for the sanctification of priests, I have remembered you specifically, brothers, at the Mass and pray with you for the good works God will allow us to accomplish together for this diocese.

I hope to see faith formation as another set-stone for my ministry in the diocese. Through existing educational ministries—our Catholic schools, religious education programs, adult education programs and various kinds of study, we can encourage study about the heritage of our living faith and the ways in which we can profess it in our daily lives.

In short, I look forward to working with the deacons, consecrated religious, and all the lay faithful of the Diocese of La Crosse, as we continue to live as those called by Jesus Christ to let our light shine before all our brothers and sisters so that they may see good in our actions and give honor and glory to our heavenly Father.

I ask, in a special way, that the prayers of the sick and homebound be offered and united with me during these days of transition and change. Your daily aches and pains and all the suffering you endure will be a powerful arsenal of prayer for me and for this diocese and I will definitely remember you in my prayers and in the daily celebration of the Mass.

Now, I would be happy to respond to your questions or comments.