

INSTALLATION: +WILLIAM PATRICK CALLAHAN  
10<sup>th</sup> Bishop—Diocese of La Crosse  
11 August 2010  
Cathedral of St. Joseph the Workman

Praised be Jesus Christ!

That's where we start, folks; and I sincerely hope that everyday God gives me to serve as your bishop, the name of Jesus Christ will be praised and honored in all that we do and all that we accomplish together. Now, that, my dear brothers and sisters in Christ, should give you absolutely everything you need to know about your new bishop. Then again, many of you who are here today know that I am not usually that concise—or that brief. So, please allow a bit of elaboration.

In proclaiming the Name of Jesus Christ, I further give thanks for the gift of His Church and for the life and ministry of His Vicar on earth, the Pope. I offer my humble gratitude to His Holiness, Pope Benedict XVI, for calling me to the pastoral care of this Diocese of La Crosse. I offer my continued allegiance and loyalty to the Vicar of Christ as I pledge my life and energies for the care of all the souls created and loved by God in this part of our State so appropriately known as “God’s Country.”

I rejoice in the presence of His Excellency, Archbishop Raymond Burke, the Prefect of the Apostolic Signatura in Rome, himself a former bishop and native-son of this diocese. Thanks and special greetings to His Excellency, Archbishop Timothy Dolan of the Archdiocese of New York. Greetings and welcome to my brother bishops of the dioceses of Wisconsin. I am grateful to my dear brother bishops from the region and around the country, members of my Conventual Franciscan Community, brother priests and deacons, dear seminarians, consecrated men and women religious, and lay ecclesial ministers who honor the Diocese of La Crosse and its Faithful, by your presence here today. I express sincere thanks to my immediate predecessor, His Excellency, Archbishop Jerome ListECKI, of the Archdiocese of Milwaukee and the Metropolitan Bishop of the Province of Wisconsin for installing me today as diocesan bishop of this local Church.

The news of my appointment as the new bishop of La Crosse came—as such calls always do—quite unexpectedly, in the late afternoon of a lazy Memorial Day. I must say, it added new dimensions to my enjoyment of bratwurst and beer. In prayerful preparation for *this* day, however, I found great comfort in the knowledge that the Lord’s call to greater service in His Church came in the midst of something so ordinary as a first summer picnic; but that’s the way it is, isn’t it, folks? God speaks to us in our humanity, in the performance of our ordinary daily tasks. We have come to know by our faith and our direct experience that God is not an “intruder” from outside the human condition imposing Himself upon humanity; rather, God has revealed Himself as one with the human condition, radically and profoundly present in the mystery of human life and experience. Thus, the call from the Nuncio, while it was at once challenging and daunting, became a personal invitation from Jesus to put out even further into the deep—with Him. I’d like you to consider that invitation with me.

An invitation from Jesus always involves some risk and self-surrender and only becomes possible when one has confidence and trust in the One who is making the offer. Each of the apostles accepted the invitation. Each agreed to lay down his life in the service of the Master. We know why they did that, don't we? We know each one of them had confidence in an undeniable and personal relationship with Jesus Christ. Their eyewitness accounts of the life of Christ became teachings imbued with the grace of the Spirit of Love that inspired others and gave birth to the Church.

Throughout history Jesus continues to speak through His Church and its apostolic witnesses. Today the Church marks with great joy the feast of St. Clare, the Virgin and the companion of St. Francis of Assisi. The witness value of their lives of holy poverty in obedience to the Gospel continues to inspire people of all ages with a vision of hope that is born from the truth of its teachings and the reality of its practice in daily human life. The marrow of the Gospel continues to give life and hope because it is born from the teachings and the life of Christ Himself. It is not a mere philosophy or a self-help program; it is the very essence of human need, fulfillment, and the blueprint of our very destiny.

Christ is, and always must be the starting point of our faith! It is He who sets our human compass; it is He who is the Way, the Truth and the Life. It is He who in face-to-face communication with the Father shares an authentic and personal dialogue of love. This Trinitarian companionship forms the grist of the establishment of all life and most certainly is the epicenter of the formation of the Church.

In the sending forth of the apostles, Trinitarian love is articulated and becomes fully expressed in the apostolic life and mission of the Church. The invitation to witness to Christ begins with sharing His—Trinitarian—life and work of bringing the Gospel to all creatures. From the beginning, Our Blessed Lord chose human companions to be with Him in the task of establishing His Church. He sent them out to call others to penance, to heal the sick, and to proclaim the Good News. He sent them out *together* so that they might have the strength of fraternity, the assurance of protection on the way, and the guarantee that the integrity of the message would remain true and verifiable. This apostolic nature of the Church remains intact to this day and is fulfilled particularly in and through the ministry of bishops for the authentic sanctification, education, and leadership of God's people.

As we gather in this beautiful cathedral today, we witness a ceremony that is different from other rites of passage or the mere “passing of the baton” to a new chief executive officer. This is an event that affects all of our lives throughout this diocese. The recognition of a new Shepherd for this local Church is truly meant to be *an awakening to the Gospel*—an awakening that stirs devotion and love, honor and service to **Jesus Christ**—the focal point and the only true constant in our lives.

The apostolic nature of the Church insures that the Shepherd does not come alone, nor does he come of his own accord. As God has given this grace, the Shepherd comes in the name of Jesus Christ. He is sent by the Vicar of Christ himself, and supported by the College of Bishops who guarantee with him the authentic proclamation of the Gospel of Jesus Christ.

My dear brothers and sisters in Christ, as your bishop I accept not simply the care of properties, the balancing of ledgers, legal affairs, and the upkeep of temporal services. As your bishop, I accept something much more significant: the call of Jesus Christ for the care and support of your immortal souls in His name. This is not a task I assume lightly, nor do I think for a moment that you would expect me to.

As my first collaborators in our common task of claiming souls for Christ, I look forward to the faithful and loving fraternity of the priests of this diocese. I promise you that I will be steadfast in my support for you and do my best with you as spiritual father, brother, and friend, as we work together in this bountiful portion of the Lord's vineyard. Today, we keep the memorial of St. Philomena, the faithful patroness and heavenly friend of St. John Vianney, the patron of priests. On the day after my announcement here as bishop, on my return trip to Milwaukee, a brother priest and I stopped at the National Shrine of St. Philomena in Briggsville, in the Diocese of Madison. I took the occasion to light a candle there and offer a prayer for all of you, my dear brother priests. I entrust you to her care and most certainly to our beloved Holy Mother, the Immaculate Virgin Mary, whom we honor and revere in our diocese in a special way under the title Our Lady of Guadalupe—Our Lady of the Americas.

To my brother deacons, I pledge my willingness to encourage ministries of service and charity, so that together we may energize our communities to use their talents and natural abilities more effectively for the building up of the Kingdom of God.

How blessed we are to have so many faithful consecrated religious women and men in the diocese. As many of you know, today I also celebrate my fortieth anniversary of consecration to the Lord as a Conventual Franciscan friar. I am aware of the tremendous and awesome gift religious life can be in the local Church. I heartily intend to call you to the fullest measure of your authentic charisms and gifts to be used in faithful service for this diocese and for the common good of the Church.

I cherish the opportunity to work with the many lay ecclesial ministers and faithful lay volunteers who help to build the body of Christ in our parishes and our Catholic schools. Your work is greatly appreciated, brothers and sisters. I look forward to meeting you and listening to the many ways you express your service to Jesus and His Church.



Because I am from Chicago, some have questioned my ability or willingness to work in a largely rural diocese. Let me tell you folks, I may be a “big city boy,” but I have stepped in a few cow pies along the way and, no doubt, will probably step in a few more. But I really will rely on all of you to help me wipe off my shoes and keep on going. God gives each of us grace to do His work. You are my people and I will be where you are. I never want you to think that I will be timid or afraid of doing what I am supposed to do as your bishop. I will seek you out whether you’re in a cow barn or an office building, on a hay bailer or operating an MRI machine. Wherever you are, you are God’s own creation, special and unique; you are redeemed by the precious blood of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ and I am your bishop. The words of St. Augustine resonate so well here: “*With* you, I am a Christian—*for* you, I am a bishop.” To seek to do the will of God and to accomplish His work is rich and fulfilling. I hope to inspire and be inspired by the work we will do together in this local Church.

Now, please allow me a moment to add a somewhat difficult, but necessary comment. We have faced pain and heartache as a Church. There is justifiable anger, disappointment, and frustration concerning the issue of the sexual abuse crisis. No pain that we feel as a Church can ever equal the pain of those who have been harmed by clergy sexual abuse. To the victims/ survivors of such abuse I apologize for the harm that has been done. I apologize personally, sincerely and humbly. We cannot replace that pain, but we can work together with those who have been hurt to bring about some healing. Most importantly, we pledge our firm resolve to do everything possible to make sure nothing like this can ever happen again.

As Pope John Paul II said: "there is no place in the priesthood for anyone who would harm a child." I agree.

As your new bishop, I reiterate to this pledge of my predecessors and of our Holy Father to you. I commit myself and the members of our diocesan, parish, and school staffs to the rigorous implementation of the Charter for the Protection of Children and Young People.

Necessary procedures and policies will be clearly stated and enforced to ensure that children are kept safe and perpetrators are held accountable for their actions. I pledge to remain vigilant in the implementation of these programs and promise that they will be a priority of my ministry here. Together, with prayerful vigilance we will move forward.

We, of course, continue to press on as God's People. There are and will be challenges that affect us and our Church. Let us always remember that the one way for peace and hope for the future is Jesus Christ. I invite you all to stand with me with a sense of heroism and commitment. It is far too easy to walk away quietly than to stand and remain faithful during the difficult days as we battle against secular relativism and popularism. Only by recognizing the primacy of Christ in our lives will we see a change in the world in which we live. Jesus came to cast fire on the earth. He wants it to burn in the hearts of each and every one of us. It is the fire of His love—a desire for His truth.

We may call on the great witnesses to Christ even in our own time, such as Blessed Teresa of Calcutta, Blessed Miguel Pro, Blessed Jerzy Popielusko, and on and on. These heroic people stood up to the contradictions and the challenges that the world has placed before them. They chose Jesus Christ and His Church. They are part of our world—our lifetimes. They lead us to believe that the Church is a living organism. You and I are a part of this Church—part of this Body of Christ. I believe that we have some great days ahead of us. Yes, there is work—serious work. I do not like to work alone—I want to know that you are with me share the vision of Jesus Christ and that you will join me in this work. Jesus told us not to be afraid. Will you listen?

At the beginning of his Pontificate, Pope Benedict offered a reflection that I want to share here as a foundation for my ministry in this diocese. The Pope said:

*“We suffer on account of God’s patience. And yet, we need his patience. God, who became a lamb, tells us that the world is saved by the Crucified One, not by those who crucified him. The world is redeemed by the patience of God. It is destroyed by the impatience of man.*

I invite you to remain filled with courage and hope for the future, brothers and sisters. Let us seek first the kingdom of God and work that His Kingdom come on earth as it is in heaven, so that one day, we may attain the life for which we have truly been created—to which may God lead us all!