

Closing Remarks by Archbishop Michael J. Sheehan

People of God, August 2014

Friday, July 18, 2014

Cathedral Basilica of St. Francis of Assisi, Santa Fe, NM

I Introduction

There would be no way for me to let you go without saying a few words. I'm reminded of that story about the lady with a lot of antiques in her house hiring a new maid to clean her house. She said to the maid, "Take care of that table over there it goes back to Louis XIV". "That's nothing" said the maid "my whole dining room set goes back to Wal-Mart on the 17th." I don't go back to Louis XIV, but 75 years is a pretty long time.

I want to thank all of you for being here in Santa Fe for this Eucharistic Thanksgiving for 50 years of priesthood and 75 years of life. You represent almost every period of my life. My brother Joe and his wife Fran and my many nieces and nephews. My brother John couldn't come as the altitude here is harmful to his health, but his sons and daughters are here. Our sister, Mary, passed away some years ago but some of her family is here as well as other cousins and relatives are here also.

Priests, deacons, seminarians, religious, friends, a large number of brother bishops, lay men and women from here and elsewhere. I want to thank my good friend and spiritual son, Bishop Joseph Strickland, for his wonderful homily.

II In the Beginning

When I was a kid growing up in Texarkana, TX, Msgr. Joseph Erberick was the Vocations Director. One of his projects for promoting vocations was a Diocese of Dallas vocation poster contest. In the 8th grade I did my vocation poster under the watchful eyes of Sr. Regina and won 1st place which was a \$10 prize given at the Cathedral in Dallas. Three years later, I entered the seminary. Msgr. Erberick bragged that he got a priest for the Dallas Diocese for just \$10! Someone told him, "Of course, Joe, you get what you pay for!"

III Psalm 27

As we all do at this time of anniversaries, I was reflecting on the feelings I had in July 1964 when I was ordained. I actually came across my First Mass Homily. I used words of Psalm 27, 4 to conclude that homily. "One thing I ask of the Lord, this I seek, to dwell

in the House of the Lord all the days of my life.” For the author of Psalm 27 the “House of the Lord” was no doubt the temple in Jerusalem. He wanted to be in the temple. To me, the House of the Lord has always meant the Catholic Church which I love so very much. To be a servant in the church meant everything to me 50 years ago. It means everything to me today.

IV Dayenu

I have arranged a kind of Litany of Thanksgiving along the lines of a Jewish Dayenu Prayer that I would like to share with you.

1. If God had only given me good parents who provided a great genetic package, who loved me, provided me and my brother Jody and John and my sister Mary a happy and Catholic upbringing – it would have been enough.
2. If God had only called me to priestly service and only given me the fulfilling days of life in the seminary in San Antonio and Rome – it would have been enough.
3. If God had only allowed me ministerial fruitful years as assistant pastor in Tyler, TX, working with the high school youth, with confessions, baptisms, converts, with tuberculosis patients, the Hispanic families and Lebanese parishioners – it would have been enough.
4. If God had only directed my steps to work with the U.S. Catholic Conference of Bishops at the national level where I labored with Cardinals Dearden and Krol, then Bishop Bernardin, Bishop Ralusch, then Fathers Kelly and Lynch and other fascinating leaders and friends – it would have been enough.
5. If God had only allowed me to be the rector of Holy Trinity Seminary where I worked with several hundred good and dedicated young men, over 100 of whom are now priests, five of them bishops – it would have been enough.
6. If God had only let me be pastor of Grand Prairie, TX where I was so privileged to feed the parishioners on Sundays with the Word of God and the Bread of the Sacrament, where I worked with the school children and faculty and told the people of that blue collar parish how much they had going for them – it would have been enough.
7. If God had only let me enjoy happy moments, the good things of life – wine and food with friends and family, skiing on fresh snow, swimming in a cool pool, jogging in the morning freshness, laughing and working with staff and fellow Christians – it would have been enough.

8. If God had only made me First Bishop of the new Diocese of Lubbock with its Hispanic and Anglo Communities, its great need for development of its missions, working with wonderful clergy and religious, its freshness and its loving spirit – it would have been enough.
9. If God had only given me the hope with continued Vatican II renewal of his Holy Roman Catholic and Apostolic Church and invited me to be a part of it called me to be a messenger of evangelization – it would have been enough.
10. If God had only sent me to be the 11th Archbishop of Santa Fe with its multi-cultural mix of Native Americans, Hispanics, Anglos and others, and over 400 years long Catholic traditions, its loving and generous people and faith-filled clergy and religious – it would have been enough.
11. If only God had used me to help establish Catholic Radio in New Mexico; and the Catholic Chair of studies at UNM, and to ordain over 65 priests, 47 of them for the archdiocese, over 125 deacons and confirm about 67,000 teenagers and adults and to bring healing and renewal – it would have been enough.

But he has done all this and much, much more.

V Closing

May God continue to bless you and me and to allow us to praise him for his kindness and to continue our journey of faith on earth in his Catholic Church and one day meet merrily in Heaven. Amen.