

# Homily Reflections, Selected Readings

My thanks go to Father Frank Callaghan for the invitation to be with you this evening. Also, to Msgr. Moeller, who has worked with Father Jaskot to prepare for this evening's Eucharist. I want to thank also the many priests and deacons who have come to share in our celebration of a century of faith in this parish.

(Is 56:1, 6-7) "For my house shall be called a house of prayer for all peoples." Truly, this is a house of prayer. And, for a century, the people of Bel Air have gathered here to worship God, first in an older, smaller church, built and dedicated by Father Frederick in 1905 and, for many years, in this building, which was blessed by Cardinal Lawrence Shehan in 1969.

(I Corinthians 3:9c-11, 16-17) "You are God's building." The Apostle puts it bluntly, a reminder to us that we depend utterly on the Creator, although the Apostle, who had preached the gospel of Jesus to the Corinthians, is willing to take some credit. "According to the grace of God given to me, like a wise master builder I laid a foundation and another is building upon it."

(John 2:13-22) Some of the leaders said, "This temple has been under construction for 46 years, and you will raise it up in three days?"

The Lord was of course speaking of his own future resurrection, and also of his Church, which has shown through history an amazing resilience. We see it today with the youth, who want to recover the faith and the joy and the serious ways of an earlier period. We see this marvelous resilience in St. Margaret's Parish, with its many flourishing organizations and its dedication to causes of justice and peace. This weekend we think especially of the very first human rights issue, so beautifully brought out in the Declaration of Independence, the right to life itself.

We see it in the election of the new Holy Father, who is building resolutely on the foundations of his predecessor, Pope John Paul II.

While some waste time and words speculating on the Conclave of Cardinals which

elected Pope Benedict XVI, it is worth our while to reflect on the event briefly.

Before Pope John Paul died, he in various ways prepared for the selection of his successor. As the tributes proved when he died, the whole world shared in the grief. I celebrated three Masses here, two at the Cathedral and one at Holy Rosary Parish, where he had visited as Cardinal Wotyla. What grace-filled events they were.

Then, the night before I flew to Rome, we had an interfaith service at the Cathedral of Mary Our Queen to bring together others who were grateful for the ministry of the Successor of the Apostle Peter.

Present were rabbis and imams as well as leaders of other Christian churches and elected public officials. Two of the rabbis and one imam I had introduced to the late Pope took part in the service, and they were especially pleased to join in the tribute to his memory. With the Christian leaders, they promised their prayers that our conclave would proceed with the blessing of God.

In Rome, we Cardinals assembled daily for what were called General Congregations. In Italian and English, under the presidency of our Dean, Cardinal Ratzinger, we were encouraged to present our views on the situation in the world and the Church, covering a number of issues. I spoke of a challenge facing us in the United States, as did other Cardinals from our country. At the outset, I found that I knew most of the Cardinals personally, 94 out of 115. By the time of the Conclave, we all had a chance to know everybody and to know the principal strengths of the Church and the challenges facing her. We also met in small gro