

# St. Michael the Archangel 100th Anniversary

## **Introduction**

What a pleasure to be with all of you this afternoon as we conclude the celebration of the 100th anniversary of St. Michael Parish. I am delighted to have the opportunity offer Mass so near to the Patronal Feast of the Parish, St. Michael the Archangel, to remember the history of this parish and give thanks, to look ahead with confidence in the Gospel, and thank all of you for your fidelity, your goodness, and your evident love for your parish.

At the same time, I want to join with you in expressing our common gratitude to one who labors day in and day out, with youthful zest and energy, in advancing the mission of this parish to bear witness to the Gospel – that's your good pastor, Fr. Jim Sorra! And in thanking Fr. Sorra I also want to thank the dedicated parish staff and the lay leadership of the parish for helping to direct and sustain this Church and its mission of faith, worship, and service.

## **Reflections on the History of the Parish**

For a few moments, let's reflect upon history of this parish and what it means in light of the feast day of St. Michael and in light of the challenges we are facing now and in the future.

As you know, this parish began on what we might call, "a wing and a prayer." I understand that in 1913 a strawberry festival netted \$500 and that was enough to get the ball rolling. Soon land was purchased, a pastor was appointed, Fr. Dillon, and an Auxiliary Bishop, Bishop Corrigan, was laying a cornerstone. And the parish flourished, so much so, that in 1950, the 4th Pastor, Father William Sauer, expanded the physical plant of the parish, including the building of a new school and later on, a parish hall.

Of course, the history of the parish is not just a history of buildings nor even a history of parish leaders. It's a history that you write every day, in your homes and families, as you listen to God's word, share the Church's teaching with your children,

gather around the altar of the Lord on Sunday and in moments of prayer at home, and then seek to serve the wider community, reaching out the poor and vulnerable who bear the image of Christ in a special way.

### **A Larger Picture**

Our faith is, of course, something deeply personal. It has to do with our personal relationship with God, with our most cherished beliefs and values, and it shapes our relationships and how we see the world. And most of all, it is from our faith that we grow in our conviction that God the Father loves us, that he sent his Son to save us, and that he walks with us, every day, guiding us toward everlasting life.

It is also from the parish community that we find the strength to live our faith, in a society that sometimes seems hostile what our Church stands for. By growing together in faith, by worshipping as a community, and by serving the needs of others, we not only find the courage to defend our faith but indeed to bear joyful witness to the Lord... to attract others by our evident love for the Lord, for one another, and for the community around us.

### **But there's more...**

But there's more and here's where your patron really helps us all put things in their proper and ultimate perspective. Our faith may be intensely personal but it is never private. It is never just about ourselves and our best interests – We are part of a larger church and a larger community and Pope Francis constantly reminds us that we need to reaching out to others.

But St. Michael and the Archangels remind us that we are part of something *immensely larger* than ourselves. We are part of a cosmic struggle between good and evil, between the true and live God, the source of all life and love, and the forces of evil that rebelled against God and his love. The struggle is described vividly in the Book of Revelation where it tells how Michael and his angels battled against the dragon. The dragon represents the forces of evil, of Satan, the father of lies, who sought to impose his own destructive plan upon the universe in place of God's plan to save the world and gather us together in friendship.

The battle which Michael began in heaven the Lord Jesus came into the world to complete by dying on the Cross for the forgiveness of our sins and by rising from the

dead to open for us the gates of heaven. An ancient hymn which the Church sings at Easter tells how life and death, good and evil, met in a stupendous struggle and it adds, 'Life's Captain died, now he reigns no more to die.' (cf. Easter Sequence)

### **St. Michael: the Strength of God**

Like all the angels, St. Michael is a messenger of God. Pope St. Gregory the Great tells us that the name, Michael, means "Who is like God?" In his struggle with the dragon, Michael sends the message that neither Satan nor any of the forces of evil are God's equal and he foretells the definitive victory that Christ would win by conquering sins and death through his Cross and resurrection.

Which brings us back to St. Michael's in Overlea. Every time Mass is celebrated, the power of Jesus' victory over sin and death is made present here. Every time a confession is heard, that same power is made present. Every Sunday, every day, the victory of Christ over sin and death is proclaimed and then it is actualized in the celebration of the sacraments and expressed in lives of loving service to your families and those around you.

Sometimes our daily routine and problems of life seem too much. Sometimes the temptations are overwhelming and the influences that would have us let go of our faith seem too strong. Then it is that we call upon St. Michael so that he might announce to us all over again, the immensity of Christ's victory over sin and death, a victory in which we can trust, a victory in which we can share, if we but give God the permission, if we but allow him to open our hearts.

### **Conclusion**

And so we look ahead with confidence and trust in the Lord's saving power. We rely on the intercession of St. Michael and ask him to remind us in our hours of discouragement and temptation that no one is like our God, no one is so good, so loving, so powerful.

May St. Michael Parish proclaim the greatness of God now and for many years to come. God bless you and keep you always in His love!