



Mass of Thanksgiving Homily
The Most Reverend Paul J. Swain
Bishop of Sioux Falls
July 27, 2011
Cathedral of St. Joseph

My prayer intention for this Mass today is in thanksgiving for the creative artisans and skilled craftsmen, the many workers and their families who over these last two years have invested so much of themselves in achieving this wonderful result, of preserving, beautifying and restoring the Cathedral of Saint Joseph. I am grateful for those who are able to be with us in person. The program from the Mass of Dedication yesterday lists all those companies involved from South Dakota and beyond.

This intention is based in part on my personal appreciation for the beautiful way in which all of you and those you represent entered into this project not simply as a job, but respecting the purpose and the place. Thank you for your care, your courtesy and your professionalism.

This prayer intention is also based on Catholic social teaching which recognizes that work is more than a way to make a living. We believe that work, all work, is a form of continuing participation in God's creation, and that workers and their rights are to be respected. This teaching flows from our core belief in the sacredness of all human life and the fundamental dignity of all persons from conception to natural death which includes the years in between in which we live.

The Gospel reading (Mt 13:44-46) describes the length to which one might go when he discovers something of great value, using the descriptive examples of a hidden treasure and a fine pearl. In a way this Cathedral is a great treasure we have found; it is a unique pearl of exquisite beauty which we together have given our all for these many weeks, not to own for ourselves but to share with generations to come. The true treasure and true value of this special place is that God is present here and all are invited to come here to pray, to rest, to rediscover hope in the midst of a turbulent world.

Many have congratulated me on what I have accomplished here. First of all this is the Lord's work, for whom we are only His instruments. But in fact you and those who worked here are the ones of true accomplishment.

I did not put up and take down the scaffolding seemingly hundreds of times or climb up and down many thousands of times. I did not design complicated systems or have to adapt modern technology to a complex structure built years ago or painstakingly paint with brush or feather in awkward positions. I did not quarry marble or lift it or on my knees position it or painstakingly carve the intricate figures. I did not install wiring and lighting and speakers and cameras and climate control and test them and tweak them. I did not take out, clean and put back the thousands of pipes of the organ, or build and stain new wood features or install pews and fixtures. I did not make the thousands of trips to the storage area and back. I did not have to put up with the hundreds of interruptions by people who just wanted to take a peak. I did not have to troubleshoot or crunch numbers or adapt schedules, or process photos or lay out brochures. I did not have to work overtime or on weekends under pressure. I did not have to drive distances or miss spending time with family. I did not have to put up with dumb questions or redo things because someone, like me, decided to change his mind. Your list may be longer.

Please know of my deep appreciation for your quality work and for your joyful presence over these more than two years. Take pride in what you have accomplished. Please also know of my deep appreciation for your families who sacrificed in ways only known to you. Through this restoration, you have with skill and care truly participated in God's creation. May St. Joseph the Worker, our patron, watch over you. And May God bless you and your families.