

1

**Installation Mass
of
Most Reverend Charles J. Chaput, O.F.M. Cap.
September 8, 2011**

HOMILY

Cardinal Rigali and Eminent Cardinals; Monsignor Lantheaume,
brother bishops, priests and deacons; Lieutenant Governor,
Mayor Nutter and esteemed civic leaders; beloved seminarians;
fellow religious; members of my family; brothers and sisters in
Christ:

A married friend told me last week that getting ready for today reminded him of planning for a very, very, *very* big wedding. He was being humorous, but he was actually more accurate than he knew. The relationship of a bishop and his local Church is very close to a marriage. The ring I wear is a symbol of every bishop's love for his Church.

**Installation Mass
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September 8, 2011**

And a bishop's marriage to the local Church reminds me, and all of us who serve you as bishops, that a bishop is called to love his Church with all his heart, just as Christ loved her and gave his life for her.

Of course, my appointment to Philadelphia is an arranged marriage, and the Holy Father is the matchmaker. The good news is that romance is a modern invention -- and given the divorce rate common today, it is not everything it's cranked up to be. In fact, history suggests that arranged marriages often worked at least as well as those based on romantic love.

**Installation Mass
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September 8, 2011**

When arranged marriages were common, there was an expectation that people would get to know each other and then come to love one another. Good matchmakers were aware of the family history of each of the spouses and their particular needs. And the really wise matchmakers could make surprisingly good choices.

In the Church, we believe that the Holy Spirit guides the decisions of the Holy Father. And the results are always joyful if we commit our selves to cooperating with God's plan. For any marriage to work, two things need to happen. People need to fall in love, and together they need to be fruitful.

**Installation Mass
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September 8, 2011**

That's what we need to dedicate ourselves to today – to love one another and be fruitful together for the new evangelization.

Getting to know each other is a great adventure. Our life together is part of the story of salvation, which God continues even in our own time. Mary didn't expect the Annunciation. She didn't expect to be the mother of the Redeemer. And yet her act of obedience changed the course of history and led to a new covenant of love and fruitfulness. I have no illusions of being worthy of this ministry, but I do trust the wisdom of the Holy Father. So I'm deeply grateful for his confidence and the privilege of serving this local Church.

**Installation Mass
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September 8, 2011**

Along with a ring, two other symbols really define a bishop's ministry. The first is the pectoral cross which I'm wearing now. The reason it is called the pectoral cross is that it rests next to the bishop's heart. And Jesus tells us that if we want to be his disciples, we need to do three things (Mt 16:21-27): We need to deny ourselves, we need to take up our cross, and we need to follow him. It's vitally important for the bishop to really believe this, and to live it, and to preach it, even when calling people to accept it is very difficult because it is difficult to be faithful to the Gospel.

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September 8, 2011

The second symbol is the crosier, which is a symbol of the shepherd. The Good Shepherd was the first image of Christian art created by the earliest disciples in the catacombs in Rome. One of the first representations of Jesus we have is the Good Shepherd who carries a lamb on his shoulders. All of us, especially the people of Philadelphia, should keep that image in our hearts in the months ahead because the Good Shepherd really *will* bring the Church in Philadelphia through this difficult moment in our history to security and joy and a better future.

This installation today takes place in the Cathedral Basilica of Saint Peter and Saint Paul. The word cathedral comes from the Greek word *cathedra*, which means chair.

7

**Installation Mass
of
Most Reverend Charles J. Chaput, O.F.M. Cap.
September 8, 2011**

The cathedral is the church that houses the bishop's chair, which has always been seen as another symbol of the bishop's role – in this case, his teaching authority. St. Augustine of Hippo, speaking in the 4th century captured the role of the bishop in these words. He said:

“Jerusalem had watchmen who stood guard . . . And this is what bishops do. Now, bishops are assigned this higher place” -- the bishop's chair in the basilica –“so that they themselves may oversee and, as it were, keep watch over the people. For they are called *episkopos* in Greek, which means ‘overseer,’ because the bishop oversees; because he looks down from [his chair] . . .

8

**Installation Mass
of
Most Reverend Charles J. Chaput, O.F.M. Cap.
September 8, 2011**

And on account of this high place, a perilous accounting will have to be rendered [by the bishop] – unless we stand here with [such] a heart that we place ourselves beneath your feet in humility.”

Another time, on the anniversary of his episcopal ordination, Saint Augustine described the duties of a bishop in the following way: He said: [This is a big job.]

“To rebuke those who stir up strife, to comfort those of little courage, to take the part of the weak, to refute opponents, to be on guard against traps, to teach the ignorant, to shake the indolent awake, to discourage those who want to buy and sell, to

Installation Mass
of
Most Reverend Charles J. Chaput, O.F.M. Cap.
September 8, 2011

put the presumptuous in their place, to modify the quarrelsome, to help the poor, to liberate the oppressed, to encourage the good, and to suffer the evil and to love all men.”

My dear brother bishops, it’s crucial for those of us who are bishops not simply to look like bishops but to truly *be* bishops. Otherwise, we’re just empty husks -- the kind of men Augustine referred to when he said,

“You say, ‘He must be a bishop for he sits upon the cathedra.’

True – and a scarecrow might be called a watchman in the vineyard.”

**Installation Mass
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September 8, 2011**

So my brother bishops on this occasion of one bishop's installation, it is very important for us to recommit ourselves to the privilege to serve the Church and the Church's People in such an extraordinary way. My installation, my dear brothers and sisters, takes place on the Feast of the birthday of the Blessed Virgin Mary, a feast which has its origin somewhere in Syria or Palestine at the beginning of the 6th century. The traditional date of the feast, September 8, falls exactly nine months after the Feast of the Immaculate Conception of Mary. It's an important feast because it prepares the way for the birth of Jesus. I was ordained a bishop on the feast of Mary's parents, Saints Joachim and Anne. 14 years ago, I was installed as the archbishop of Denver on the Feast of the Annunciation.

**Installation Mass
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September 8, 2011**

And now I celebrate my installation as bishop of the great Church of Philadelphia on the Feast of Mary's birthday. For me, like for so many other priests, Mary has been a constant source of hope and protection in my vocation. So I ask all of you today to pray for me to the mother of God so that she surrounds all of us in the Church of Philadelphia with her love and protection.

The birthday of Mary is a turning point in the history of salvation, planned from all eternity by God's divine providence. So the readings for today should reassure us in a powerful way. All the events of a believer's life are shaped by the will of God who is a loving God. God's purpose undergirds everything that

**Installation Mass
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Most Reverend Charles J. Chaput, O.F.M. Cap.
September 8, 2011**

happens to Christians, for God is truly in control. So in the midst of the turmoil of the Church in our time, specifically in Philadelphia, this feast of Mary's birth should remind us of God's loving plan. We need to make the act of faith embedded in today's first reading: that "all things work for good for those who love God and who are called according to his purpose."

And just as God foreknew and predestined Mary's birth, God foreknew and predestined us to be conformed to the image of his Son so that Jesus might be the firstborn of many brothers. Saint Jose Maria Escriva said this about the struggle with fear and anxiety that all of us sooner or later face. He said: "Have you forgotten that God is your father? Or [that God is] powerful, infinitely wise, full of mercy? [God] would never send you

**Installation Mass
of
Most Reverend Charles J. Chaput, O.F.M. Cap.
September 8, 2011**

anything evil. The thing that is worrying you is good for you even though those earthbound eyes of yours may not be able to see it now.”

Of course, in the unfolding of Scripture, Mary’s birthday is ultimately about the birth of her son. The Gospel for today is the story of how Jesus was conceived. And we honor Mary precisely because she gave birth to Jesus, who is our messiah and Lord. The Gospel focuses on Joseph’s goodness and fidelity, and on Mary’s perfect surrender to God in love, trusting in the providence of God. We need to follow the example of Mary and the example of Joseph, trusting God in the difficult times of our life. The issues that Joseph and Mary faced seemed

**Installation Mass
of
Most Reverend Charles J. Chaput, O.F.M. Cap.
September 8, 2011**

insurmountable and caused intense confusion. But the name given to Jesus signifies “Savior” and we know that in Jesus, God promises to be with us. He is Emmanuel – God is with us. This gives us great confidence in the future God has planned for us.

This Church in Philadelphia faces very serious challenges these days. There’s no quick fix to problems that are so difficult, and none of us here today, except the Lord Himself, is a miracle worker. But it is important to remember and to believe that the Church is not defined by her failures. And you and I are not defined by our critics or by those who dislike us. What we do in the coming months and years to respond to these challenges – *that* will define who we really are. And in engaging that work, we need to be Catholics first and always. Jesus Christ is the

**Installation Mass
of
Most Reverend Charles J. Chaput, O.F.M. Cap.
September 8, 2011**

center of our lives, and the Church is our mother and our teacher. Everything we do should flow from that.

So, what we embark on today is an arranged marriage, where someone who loves you, the Holy Father, is also someone who loves me. And the Holy Father knows in his wisdom that we will make a good family together. So we should see each other as gifts. I receive you as a gift from the Holy Father; and this requires that you receive me and my service as a gift from him too. This requires that we make a commitment, an act of the will deep in our hearts, to love one another, to be patient with one another, and to ultimately lay down our lives for one another.

**Installation Mass
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Most Reverend Charles J. Chaput, O.F.M. Cap.
September 8, 2011**

So I'll close with repeating what I said in July to the bishops (my dear brothers, Auxiliary Bishops), the priests and deacons of this diocese, our men and women religious, our seminarians, and to all the faithful: Whatever my weaknesses and they are many, and whatever my lacks and they are many too, no bishop will give himself more joyfully to you and the service of this Church than I will in order to renew our Church together. No bishop will try harder to help persons who have been hurt by the sins of the past. And no bishop will work harder to strengthen and encourage my brother priests, and to restore the hearts of our faithful. Everything I've learned in my 24 years as a bishop and 41 years as a priest, and everything I have, I will give to this ministry, because all of you -- the people of God entrusted to my care deserve it—and I love you.