



**SOLEMNITY OF THE IMMACULATE CONCEPTION  
OF THE BLESSED VIRGIN MARY**

SESQUICENTENNIAL OPENING LITURGY  
BY MSGR. RUSSELL M. BLEICH, PAROCHIAL ADMINISTRATOR  
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HOMILY

**I INTRO:**

- A. AT THE PREFACE OF EVERY MASS YOUR PRIEST INVITES YOU:  
1 HE SAYS: **“LET US GIVE THANKS TO THE LORD OUR GOD.”**  
2. YOU RESPOND **“IT IS RIGHT TO GIVE HIM THANKS AND PRAISE.”**
- B. DURING THIS SESQUICENTENNIAL YEAR WE SAY, SAY:  
1. **“LET US GIVE THANKS TO THE LORD OUR GOD**  
2. RESPONSE: **“IT IS RIGHT TO GIVE HIM THANKS AND PRAISE.”**
- C. 150 YEARS AGO THIS HOLY GROUND WAS MISSION LAND.  
1. MANY PEOPLE LIVED IN LOG CABINS.  
2. THEY TRAVELED ON FOOT OR HORSEBACK OR SPRINGLESS WAGON  
3 THIS LAND OF OPPORTUNITY WAS ALSO A DANGEROUS LAND  
4. THERE WERE RUMORS OF SECESSION AND CIVIL WAR  
5. ABE LINCOLN WAS A YOUNG CONTROVERSIAL POLITICIAN  
6. THERE WAS NEWS OF THE SLAUGHTERING OF BUFFALO

**ON THE PLAINS NORTH AND WEST OF HERE**

- D. TO THIS LAND CAME PEOPLE OF FAITH FROM PARISHES AND COUNTRIES ACROSS THE SEA SEEKING A BETTER LIFE  
1. WHEN THE MISSIONARY PRIEST CAME HERE TO CELEBRATE THE FEAST OF THE IMMACULATE CONCEPTION  
HE DID SO IN LATIN (BARRETTA ON) **DOMINUS VOBISCUM”**  
2. AND THEN HE TAUGHT THE PEOPLE IN THEIR OWN LANGUAGE.  
3. MANY THINGS HAVE CHANGED SINCE THEN (BARRETTA OFF)

**BUT NOT THE TIMELESS MYSTERIES OF OUR FAITH.**

4. HE READ THE SAME SCRIPTURES THAT WE HAVE HEARD TODAY  
THE AMAZING GRACE HE PROCLAIMED TO THEM-  
I NOW PROCLAIM TO YOU TODAY.

**II. BY THE GRACE OF CHRIST MARY WAS SINLESS FROM HER  
CONCEPTION**

- A. IN **GENESIS** WE HEAR OF SIN AND ITS HORRIBLE CONSEQUENCES
1. BUT THEN WE HEAR THE GOOD NEWS GOD HAS A PLAN TO SAVE US FROM SIN
  2. THE LOVE OF OUR GOD FOR US IS STRONGER THAN SIN AND DEATH
  3. HE WILL DO THIS THROUGH THE OFFSPRING OF A WOMAN

- B. IN OUR SECOND READING FROM **ST. PAUL**
1. WE, WE KNOW THIS OFFSPRING TO BE JESUS
  2. HE IS GOD'S SON WHO GAVE HIS LIFE TO SAVE US FROM SIN
  3. IN HIM WE WERE CHOSEN AND BECAME  
THE ADOPTED CHILDREN OF GOD
  4. WITH ST. PAUL OUR HEARTS PRAISE GOD FOR JESUS

- C. WE KNOW THE WOMAN IN GENESIS TO BE MARY
1. IN OUR **GOSPEL** WE HEAR HER SAY "YES" TO GOD -  
TO BE THE MOTHER OF JESUS BY THE POWER OF THE SPIRIT
  2. SHE THE HUMBLE MAIDSERVANT BECAME THE MOTHER OF GOD
  3. WE BELIEVE - BY A MYSTERY OF GRACE - MARY WAS KEPT  
FREE FROM SIN FROM THE TIME OF HER CONCEPTION
  4. ON THE CROSS JESUS GAVE HIS SINLESS MOTHER  
TO BE OUR MOTHER TOO - WE LOVE HER AS JESUS DID
  6. AS THE ACQUITTED, ADOPTED CHILDREN OF GOD  
WE SINNERS HAVE BECOME CO-HEIRS WITH CHRIST  
TO THE KINGDOM OF GOD FOREVER.
  7. THIS IS THE GOOD NEWS.  
IT DOES NOT GET ANY BETTER THAN THIS.
  8. WITH THOSE WHO HAVE GONE BEFORE US IN FAITH  
FOR 150 YEARS - TODAY WE GIVE THANKS AND PRAISE  
TO GOD  
FOR OUR SPIRITUAL MOTHER MARY,  
THE IMMACULATE CONCEPTION.
  9. **"LET US GIVE THANKS TO THE LORD OUR GOD."**  
(RESPONSE) **"IT IS RIGHT TO GIVE HIM THANKS AND PRAISE."**

**III. FROM GENERATION TO GENERATION AND AGE TO AGE  
- FOR 150 YEARS**

GOD HAS GATHERED A PEOPLE TO HIMSELF  
HERE AT IMMACULATE CONCEPTION PARISH

- A. THE AMAZING SACRED STORY OF OUR PARISH IS FILLED WITH;
- \* JOYS AND SORROWS,
  - \*THE AGONY OF THE CROSS OF JESUS

- \*THE INTIMACY AND ECSTASY OF COMMUNION,
- \*THE HARD WORK AND JOY OF PARISH DINNERS AND FUND RAISERS
- \*THE LOVE AND LAUGHTER OF A WEDDING
- \*THE PEACE OF CONFESSION AND FORGIVENESS OF SIN
- \*TEARS OF CHILDBIRTH AND TEARS OF DEATH

B. TIME ONLY PERMITS MENTION A FEW OF THE HIGHLIGHTS  
IN THIS HOMILY.

1. BUT I HAVE SEEN AN ADVANCE COPY OF OUR HISTORY BOOK.
2. TO READ IT IS AN IT IS AN AWESOME EXPERIENCE OF GRACE .
3. IT IS A PAGE TURNER FILLED WITH HUNDREDS OF PICTURES
4. YOU WILL BE SPIRITUALLY TOUCHED AND INSPIRED.

#### IV. HERE ARE A FEW HIGHLIGHTS OF OUR SACRED STORY

A. 1858 WAS THE YEAR OF THE HISTORIC LINCOLN / DOUGLAS DEBATES  
IN THAT YEAR THE PASTOR FROM **OUR MOTHER PARISH** OF  
ST. MARY IN IOWA CITY CAME TO TELL US  
WE WOULD BECOME OUR OWN PARISH  
AND HAVE **OUR OWN PASTOR.**

WE ARE SO PLEASED AND HONORED TO HAVE WITH US TODAY  
THE PASTOR OF OUR MOTHER PARISH - FR. KENNETH KUNTZ  
PLEASE CONVEY OUR GRATITUDE TO YOUR PEOPLE.

B. **OUR FIRST PASTOR WAS FR. WILLIAM EMONDS**

1. HE QUICKLY FORMED OUR PARISH COMMUNITY  
WHO DEDICATED THEMSELVES AND  
THE GENERATIONS THAT FOLLOWED TO MARY,  
THE IMMACULATE CONCEPTION.
2. MARY HAS CARED FOR US FROM THE BEGINNING.
3. OUR FIRST CHURCH WAS BUILT
  - \*IT WAS A WOOD FRAME BRIDLING
  - \*LOCATED ON THIRD AVE. AND 7th STREET
  - \*IT WAS ABOUT THE SAME SIZE AS OUR PRESENT GARAGE

C. BY THE GRACE OF GOD OUR PARISH PROSPERED

1. SOON OUR PASTOR SERVED  
SEVERAL OTHER MISSION COMMUNITIES AT:
  - \*ANAMOSA, BELLE PLAINE, BLAIRSTOWN, MARSHALLTOWN,
  - \*ROCK ISLAND, ILLINOIS, MARION AND FAIRFAX.
2. WITHIN A DECADE THE ORIGINAL BUILDING BECAME TOO SMALL
3. A LARGER CHURCH WAS BUILT ACROSS THE STREET.
4. IC PARISH BECAME KNOWN AS-  
-A WELCOMING PARISH TO IMMIGRANTS

5. A SIGNIFICANT NUMBER OF THEM WERE IRISH

D. THE YEAR 1875 WAS A HISTORIC YEAR FOR COUNTRY AND PARISH

1. THE UNITED STATES SIGNED A TREATY RELATIONSHIP  
WITH THE HAWAIIAN ISLANDS
2. I C COMMUNITY AND THE **SISTERS OF MERCY**  
FORMED A RELATIONSHIP WITH MUTUAL COLLABORATION  
AND SUPPORT  
TO BRING THE GOSPEL OF JESUS AND MARY AND  
THE MERCY TOUCH TO THE HEART OF CEDAR RAPIDS  
AND BEYOND.
3. THE NEW **PARISH CONVENT** SERVED AS A **PARISH SCHOOL**,  
A BOARDING SCHOOL AND MOTHER HOUSE.
4. IN 1886, WITH PARISH AND COMMUNITY SUPPORT,  
THE SISTERS OF MERCY FOUNDED **MERCY HOSPITAL**.  
THAT SAME YEAR BASEBALL BECAME THE NATIONAL PASTIME.
5. TODAY WE GIVE PUBLIC THANKS TO THE SISTERS OF MERCY  
IN THE SPIRIT OF MARY AND MOTHER MCAULEY.  
\*YOU HAVE TAUGHT OUR MINDS,  
\*NURTURED AND HEALED OUR BODIES,  
\*COLLABORATED IN BUILDING UP OUR PARISH  
\*TAUGHT US TO PRAY AND FASHIONED OUR SOULS  
WE ARE DEEPLY GRATEFUL AND WE PRAY FOR YOU  
AS YOU EMBARK ON A NEW SEASON  
OF YOUR LIFE AS RELIGIOUS WOMEN.
6. WOULD THE SISTERS OF MERCY PRESENT  
AND ALL SISTERS OF ANY ORDER WHO HAVE SERVED AT IC  
PLEASE STAND (APPLAUSE)

E. 1910 WAS A TRANSFORMATIVE YEAR FOR THE PARISH.

1. THE **SANCTUARY SOCIETY** WAS STARTED BY 12 WOMEN
2. ITS PURPOSE WAS TO UNITE CATHOLIC WOMEN  
OF THE PARISH SOCIALLY AND SPIRITUALLY  
TO WORK TO ALL CHURCH INTERESTS.
3. THE SANCTUARY SOCIETY WAS MADE UP OF SEVERAL CIRCLES.
4. THROUGH OUT THE YEARS GOD HAS USED THIS ORGANIZATION  
AND THE CIRCLES IT HAS SPAWNED  
TO BECOME A DYNAMIC POWERHOUSE  
FOR PARISH GROWTH AND VITALITY.
5. A TREMENDOUS DEBT OF GRATITUDE IS OWED  
TO THE WOMEN OF THIS PARISH WHO HAVE FASHIONED  
OUR HOMES, OUR FAMILIES, OUR PARISH FACILITIES  
OUR FORMER NEW CONVENT,  
NOW MCAULEY CENTER FOR WOMEN.

6. OF COURSE THE MEN ALSO SHARED IN THESE EFFORTS  
WITHOUT THEIR HARD WORK THERE WOULD BEEN  
\* NEITHER COLLABORATORS IN THE PROJECTS

\*NOR MONEY TO SPEND ON ALL THE FUND RAISERS  
SPONSORED BY THE CIRCLES.

7. IT IS AN AMAZING **STORY OF STEWARDSHIP** OF SELF GIVING,  
SELF SACRIFICING OF TIME AND TALENT AND TREASURE  
BY THE FAITH FILLED MEN AND WOMEN  
WHO HAVE GONE BEFORE US IN FAITH

8. NOW STEWARDSHIP DEPENDS ON US  
AS IT WAS THEN SO IT IS NOW  
AS STEWARDSHIP GOES SO GOES THE PARISH.

F. IN YEARS GONE BY - THE FAMILIES OF IC PROVIDED SEVERAL  
**VOCATIONS** TO THE PRIESTHOOD, RELIGIOUS LIFE.  
IN RECENT YEARS THIS HAS NOT BEEN SO.

G. IN 1915 HENRY FORD MASS PRODUCED THE "MODEL T" CAR  
AND THE GROWING NUMBERS OF PARISHIONERS OF IC PARISH  
**BUILT THIS THIRD BEAUTIFUL CHURCH BUILDING.**  
**"LET US GIVE THANKS TO THE LORD OUR GOD."**  
(RESPONSE) **"IT IS RIGHT TO GIVE HIM THANKS AND PRAISE."**

H. IT WAS DURING WORLD WAR I THAT THE PARISH BUILT  
**OUR LARGE SCHOOL** FOR GRADES 1 THROUGH 12

1. OUR GOD CENTERED PARISH SCHOOL  
HAS MADE AN IMPACT ON GENERATIONS.  
2. THIS SUMMER OUR ALUMNI WILL HAVE AN ALL SCHOOL  
REUNION

I. DURING THESE YEARS AND IN THE YEARS THAT FOLLOWED  
AND DURING THE DEPRESSION WE SHARED THE RICHES OF FAITH.  
1. GOD USED **IC PARISH** TO BECOME THE **MOTHER CHURCH** OF  
THE PARISHES IN CEDAR RAPIDS, LINN COUNTY AND BEYOND.  
2. WE ARE HUMBLLED AND HONORED BY THOSE MEMBERS OF  
OUR DAUGHTER PARISHES WHO ARE WITH US TODAY.

J. AFTER THE SECOND WORLD WAR - **REGIS HIGH SCHOOL** WAS BUILT,

1. YOUTH FROM IC WERE A LARGE PORTION OF THE STUDENT BODY  
2. THE PARISH PROVIDED 40% OF THE COST OF THE BUILDING.

K. **HISPANIC IMMIGRANTS** BEGAN ARRIVING IN THE 1930S

1. IN 1990 AND FOLLOWING THE EXPANSION OF THE RAILROAD AND OTHER WORK OPPORTUNITIES DREW INCREASING NUMBERS SO IT IS TODAY.
2. IN THE BEGINNING MANY LIVED IN RAILROAD BOX CARS AND IN HOUSES IN THE FORMER "C" AVENUE NEIGHBORHOOD WHICH GAVE WAY TO THE BUILDING OF HWY 380.
3. FOR THE MOST PART - THESE NEW IMMIGRANTS FOUND THE MULTICULTURAL IC PARISH COMMUNITY TO WELCOMING AND HOSPITABLE
4. IN 1992 THE ARCHDIOCESE ASKED IC PARISH TO OPEN THE OFFICE OF HISPANIC MINISTRY.
5. TODAY HISPANIC MINISTRY IS AN INTEGRAL PART OF OUR PARISH.
- 6 OUR HISPANIC BROTHERS AND SISTERS HAVE BROUGHT THEIR VALUES OF FAITH FAMILY AND FIESTA
7. LAST YEAR OF OUR 38 BAPTISMS - 27 WERE HISPANIC,
8. **"LET US GIVE GOD THANKS AND PRAISE."**  
(RESPONSE) **"IT IS RIGHT TO GIVE THANKS AND PRAISE."**

M. IN RECENT YEARS WE HAVE BEEN BLESSED BY THE GIFT OF ORDAINED PERMANENT DEACONS OF SERVICE - WORD - AND - SACRAMENT

1. OUR DEACON TODAY IS DEACON JERRY PETTIT.  
WE THANK GOD AND YOU FOR YOUR VOCATION.
2. PRESENTLY TRAINING TO BE A DEACON FROM IC IS HISPANIC PARISHIONER - DIEGO RAMIREZ.

N. THROUGH THE YEARS WE HAVE BEEN BLESSED WITH 20 HOLY PASTORS AND MANY ASSOCIATE PASTORS

1. THEY WERE MEN GOD AND MEN OF THE PEOPLE
2. USING THE DIVERSE CHARISMS THAT GOD GAVE THEM EACH LEFT HIS OWN SPIRITUAL LEGACY WHICH WE INHERIT.
3. THEY HAVE PROCLAIMED THE WORD AND CELEBRATED THE EUCHARIST.
- 4 BY THE GRACE OF GOD THEY HAVE BAPTIZED US, FORGIVEN OUR SINS, TAUGHT US, MARRIED US, ANOINTED US AND BURIED OUR LOVED ONES.
5. THEY HAVE LED US TO REACH OUT TO THE POOR AND TO STAND WITH THOSE ON THE MARGINS AND NOT TREATED RIGHT
6. WE ARE BLESSED TO HAVE SOME OF THEM WITH US TODAY
  - \*TO FR. PHIL SCHMITT SCHMITT, FORMER PASTORS AND
  - \* TO ALL FORMER ASSOCIATE PASTORS AND PRIESTS.
  - \*ACCEPT OUR GRATITUDE-

7. WOULD ALL PRIESTS WHO HAVE SERVED AT IC  
PLEASE STAND (APPLAUSE)

**“LET US GIVE THANKS TO THE LORD OUR GOD.”**  
(RESPONSE) **“IT IS RIGHT TO GIVE HIM THANKS AND PRAISE.”**

## V. CONCLUSION

A. WE ONLY NAMED A FEW SELECTED HIGHLIGHTS OF GODS  
BLESSINGS FROM OUR SACRED STORY.

1. I AM SORRY FOR THE LENGTH - BUT IT HAS BEEN 150 YEARS
2. YOU HAVE YOUR OWN IC STORIES.
3. PLEASE SHARE THEM WITH EACH OTHER

B. AS WE BEGIN THIS SESQUICENTENNIAL YEAR

1. WE GIVE THANKS TO GOD AND  
TO OUR PATRONESS MARY, THE IMMACULATE CONCEPTION
2. WE REMEMBER THOSE WHO HAVE GONE BEFORE US IN FAITH
3. HE HAS ENKINDLED IN US THE FIRE OF HIS LOVE
4. AS WE COME TO OUR EUCHARIST-  
TO BEGIN OUR SESQUICENTENNIAL YEAR  
YOUR PARISH PRIESTS  
\*FR. HERNANDEZ, OUR ASSOCIATE PASTOR  
\*FR. HESS - OUR SORT OF - RETIRED PRIEST IN RESIDENCE  
\* AND ME, YOUR PAROCHIAL ADMINISTRATOR

WE INVITE YOU:

**“LET US GIVE THANKS TO THE LORD OUR GOD.”**  
(RESPONSE) **“IT IS RIGHT TO GIVE HIM THANKS AND PRAISE.”**