

## HOLY NAME HOMILY FEBRUARY 19, 2017.

Did you know that it snowed in East Nashville on February 10, 1914?  
You may wonder why I know that bit of trivia.

Well it was on that day that Marguerite Sanders and Oscar Hofstetter stood in the presence of Msgr. Whitfield at 6:00 a.m. in St. Columba Church and spoke their marriage vows.

Considering the time - 6:00 a.m. - and the weather conditions there were not many guests present for the wedding – a maid of honor, a best man, a vocalist and a few other family members.

I remember asking mother why 6:00 a.m.? Her response: “Well I wanted to be married at Mass and the daily Mass was at 6:00 a.m. and so we chose that time.” Seems so foreign to most of us that have grown up in a time of multiple daily Masses and the freedom to celebrate a nuptial Mass at most any convenient time.

My mother’s family lived on Woodland Street just a few blocks from the church and Dad’s family lived on Eastland Avenue about a mile away. They met here at the church at an ice cream social. Mother was serving and Dad came to enjoy the day.

As I said they were married in the parish. I had become a priest by the time that they celebrated their 50<sup>th</sup> wedding anniversary and so was able to celebrate an anniversary Mass for them here at Holy Name. Luke Burns sang for the Anniversary Mass. He had been the vocalist at their wedding and still had a strong and true voice 50 years later. I also celebrated a funeral Mass for Dad in May of 1975 and in June of 1979 for Mother. There were eight children born to my parents. The oldest, Oscar, Jr., was baptized at St. Columba. The second, John, was baptized at our home on Eastland Avenue since he was born just after the East Nashville fire destroyed St. Columba. The other six of us were baptized here at Holy Name. All of us attended Holy Name School.

My oldest brother was married here in the parish on July 11, 1938 by Msgr. Hardeman. But because Virginia was Episcopalian they were married in the rectory and not in the church. I am sure there are a few of you who can remember those days. And when the first three of their sons were baptized we started a third generation of Holy Name Catholics

Mother once told me that, as a teen, she went to her confessor and told him that she would like to enter the convent. For some reason that we never discussed he told her that he thought that she was being called to the married life and not to the convent. I have laughed about it often saying that mother gave birth to two daughters who became Dominican Sister and one son who became a priest – sort of a three for the price of one. Guess the confessor was right on track!

I learned from experience that Church – Holy Name Church was much more than a Sunday Mass. Mother went to Mass every day. Many days Dad accompanied her and we children were always encouraged to join them. I remember one time when my parents

had a key to the church since they often arrived ( mother liked to come early for some preparation time) and the pastor often arrived at the last minute.

Both my parents were active in the church family. Mother was part of the Ladies Society and Dad part of the St. Vincent de Paul Society and other activities.

So, as you might well imagine, I have many memories of Holy Name. One of the still vivid one is of the first Saint that I met. At least in my eyes, Miss Lizzy Olwell, who was always in church when mother brought me to daily Mass, was a living saint. She lived just across the street from the rectory and it seemed to me spent most of her time here in church often kneeling motionless before the crucifix.

Do you remember the story of the Presentation of Jesus in the temple and what was said about Anna the woman who welcomed Jesus and spoke to Mary and Joseph.? Luke said of her “She never left the temple and worshipped night and day...” This is what I thought of Miss Lizzy.

It was also here at Holy Name on the Sunday after Christmas 1946 when I was home from college for vacation that Msgr. Siener gave a sermon on the need for priests. After Mass I went to the sacristy and said I would like to go to the seminary. What do I do? Some eight years later I celebrated my first Mass here at Holy Name and to my great delight my first assignment was at Holy Name as Msgr. Siener’s assistant.

So... as you can see, I have many connections with the Holy Name, and am very excited to be able to be with you as a part of your 100<sup>th</sup> anniversary celebrations.

Did you notice the words of Leviticus in today’s first reading? “BE HOLY, FOR I, THE LORD, YOUR GOD, AM HOLY.”

Over the years I have learned how important it is to put some flesh on words like that. What does it mean “TO BE HOLY?”

It means to be prayerful, like a Miss Lizzy! It means to be zealous like Msgr. Seiner who was God’s instrument in calling me to the priesthood and who gave me the best advice I have ever received. He said to me one evening: “BOB, ALWAYS REMEMBER IT IS THE PEOPLE WHO MATTER”. Laws and rubrics are important, but in the end it is the people who matter. It means to parent as my parents did by living the faith.

How wisely Pope Francis is saying this very thing to the world.

TO BE HOLY means being like the ladies of the parish who organized and raised money so that we had free text books at school. It means being caring like the Dominican Sisters who taught me so much and no doubt fostered the seeds of vocation in me. And I could go on and on about how LOVE was defined for me during me early days as a child growing up in this parish and also when I returned as a priest to serve you and continue to learn from you.

Did you listen to the Gospel a few minutes ago? What a message for us in the society in which we live? How many emails have you received in the past few years telling you

who your enemies are? Telling you how bad some public figure are for some reason or another – some true, many false – fostering and encouraging enmity and dislike.

But God says to us: LOVE YOUR ENIMIES AND PRAY FOR THOSE WHO PERSECUTE YOU, THAT YOU MAY BE CHILDREN OF YOUR HEAVENLY FATHER, FOR HE MAKES HIS SUN RISE ON THE BAD AND THE GOOD, AND CAUSES THE RAIN TO FALL ON THE JUST AND THE UNJUST.”

I am grateful for all I learned from the priests, the Dominican Sisters, my classmates and the many parishioners here at Holy Name. May you continue for the next 100 years to be shining examples of the Love and Presence of God to one another here in the parish family and in the community at large. May you always be people of mercy and compassion as Pope Francis is and calls us to be.

THANK YOU FOR INVITING ME TO BE A PART OF YOUR CELEBRATION.