



*Funeral homily Fr. Bernard (Bernie) Rosinski,
SCJ Wis 3:1-6, 9; Rom 15:51-57, Mt 5:1-12*

I imagine most of us are in a state of sadness. I certainly am! And so this morning we have taken time away from our ordinary schedules. We have taken time away from our ordinary norms and have gathered here to partake in an extraordinary occasion as we are gathered here for this mass of Christian Burial for the Lord's beloved and faithful servant, and our beloved and faithful servant, Fr. Bernie. A fine man, a prophet of love and a servant of reconciliation who dedicated himself to religious life and service to his conferrers and to the people of God. Fr. Bernie dedicated his entire adult life to serving as a member of the Priests of the Sacred Heart. Actually, he entered the minor seminary at Divine Heart Seminary in Donaldson, Indiana in 1947, seventy-five years ago at the age of thirteen. He was professed in religious vows for **seventy years**. He was an ordained priest for sixty-two years. As many years as he dedicated his life to religious vows and priesthood neither the length of a person's time in religious life nor how long they live is not how a person is measured. A person is measured on what they do in their life, how they live, how they conduct themselves, their interactions and encounters with their sisters and brothers in Christ.

How we interact with one another and share our gifts each differs as we all have unique gifts and talents. As a confrere, as a member of the Priests of the Sacred Heart along with over 2300 SCJ's throughout the world we all may serve in the same congregation, we may follow the vision of our Founder Fr. Leo Dehon's charism, but we each receive from God's love, the grace of Christ and the gift of the Holy Spirit enormous opportunities to share what we have for the benefit of our confreres and the people of God. We have a special commitment for taking care of our brothers in Christ when they are called home by God. We ensure that if they had served in an apostolate like that of Lower Brule ministries where he served three years in post retirement before coming to St. Joseph's for the final eleven years of his life in a supporting role we will make sure that we have a prayer service/mass such as what we are celebrating today is offered. When one of our men pass from this world, we do not just send out a generic email, make arrangements and plan the funeral and that is the end. We, by remembering our confreres continue to preserve their memory. In my sixteen years of religious profession I have observed on multiple occasions stories being shared about our confreres by other confreres. I have observed on multiple occasions stories being shared about our confreres by local parish communities and other ministerial settings like that of St. Joseph's Indian school where Fr. Bernie continued to dedicate himself to the service of the gospel. This is a blessing! We are not just forgetting about them. We continue to develop a bond by sharing the many good stories about those who dedicated their lives to the service of God's people and with all hope learning from their wisdom. And the wisdom of our founder Leo Dehon, the early confreres of our religious congregation and our earliest arrivals that formulated

the United States province were heard, and by the way as we anticipate our centennial celebration in the United States next year, next month will be the one hundredth anniversary of our commitment to coming to South Dakota in this one sentence letter by Fr. Matthias a Luxembourg national and member of the German province. Only one sentence in a letter to the bishop was written but that is all it took to begin our commitment to serving in South Dakota, ultimately throughout the United States and ultimately bringing people like Fr. Bernie to the Congregation of the Priests of the Sacred Heart of Jesus. Many people like Fr. Bernie were attracted by what they had to offer in their ministry and thus the congregation grew as their work was carried on. Even as numbers have declined we can certainly as I stressed earlier learn from the wisdom of other religious whom we have encountered, those servants who have gone before us in the mercy of God. Accept what we have, be grateful for what we have and God will take care of us. Any human being can get stuck on concerns and repeat over and over again the problems. Each new day affords us the opportunity to do our own spring cleaning and look beyond any cloud of darkness and find goodness in people, find goodness in the things that can be done and not get overwhelmed by the things that we cannot change. Fr. Bernie knew that. I heard another SCJ once say “We should move forward.” People like Fr. Bernie constantly moved forward, particularly through his commitment to education, receiving three master’s degrees and continued to learn after all three degrees, including his degree in sacred scripture which he received (here in this building) just five years ago at the age of eighty-three. Even after his third Master’s, Fr. Bernie did not close his laptop computer, close his books or put his pen down. He continued to take notes each day, read books each day, go on his

multiple computer screen to study the Greek and Hebrew translations of various biblical texts each day as he was a dedicated scholar and confere to the very end and I mean the very end. For example, the day before he passed away, he was on his computer, researching biblical translations, going through his notes. Nothing stopped him, not his cancer, not his body becoming physically weaker day by day and hour by hour he continued to study, a student and educator for life. On the day of his passing from this world, I received a text message letting me know there was a package for me. I was debating whether to go down to the office to pick up the package as I was planning on staying at the house all day. I am very happy that I did pick up the package not because I had early birthday presents waiting for me but because there were two pieces of mail for Fr. Bernie. I gave them to him, he asked me to open them and then he shared them with me and in one of the letters was a picture of a novitiate class photo and he identified several novices from Massachusetts in the 1961 photo. He was good with faces and names. As usual, his mind was sharp remembering these faces, including some who left religious life long ago and again this photo again was over sixty years old, wow! Sadly, just two hours later after visiting with him and having nice conversations, he took his last breath. Never will I forget spending those final hours of his life with him and the time a few others caring for him spent with him. He continued his ministry; which he loved, he continued to serve the people wherever he was, whom he loved. Always moving forward! Always with a smile! Always pleasant to talk to! A man with a positive attitude about ministry and about life, even in the midst of his cancer, he did not allow terminal cancer to conquer him, he placed his faith and trust in God, he continued his commitment to prayer with a meticulous schedule until

he was no longer physically able to do so. Even then, he received communion each day, including on the final morning of his life. He never lost faith in the midst of his suffering . And through God's compassion and mercy, Fr. Bernie is no longer suffering from any illness or affliction. As the Book of Wisdom says "The souls of the just are in the hands of God, and no torment shall touch them." "They are at peace." They who were baptized with Christ. When we are baptized we are accompanied by our parents, our godparents and the people of God. As our faith journey grows through the eyes of our faith we see God's work at hand through the gift of the Holy Spirit passed down from person to person. Through the eyes of Fr. Bernie's faith he answered the call to a lifetime commitment of service to the Priests of the Sacred Heart on behalf of the people of God and of his confreres as he spent the majority of his religious profession in education and administration. This past August we observed Jubilee celebrations. Fr. Bernie found out about his diagnosis of cancer on the day the province celebrated Jubilees including mentioning his name as one of the Jubilees who was professed seventy years ago. That is seventy years of service dedicated to God, and giving thanks and praise to God for sending Fr. Bernie, a faithful servant. **(pause)** My friends, we are thankful for Fr. Bernie's service and this day of remembrance is a day that I invite all of you to give thanks to our faithful Lord for the gift of your faithful servant Fr. Bernie who we hope to be reunited with in eternity, where every tear is wiped away, in a large communal family with the people of God. We are certainly saddened by the loss of Fr. Bernie as we would be saddened by the loss of anyone who is close to us. And, when we experience such sadness perhaps we can reflect upon a time when someone we knew, family or friend supported us in such a

difficult time. Know that we have the support of each other to help us cope with the death of Fr. Bernie. We are a network of support more than we may ever realize. Such support is encouraging. The support of one another with all hope will help turn the pain into healing as we are here for one another in the healing process. Confident that the Lord will lift us from our anxieties we as Paul's letter to the Corinthians says "we walk by faith and not by sight." And we can never forget the love of God and that we can always depend upon God for our needs as we should. There are times when we will attempt to do too much and we become overwhelmed with work and anxiety. Fr. Bernie, like the rest of us was not perfect. However, as God does not measure a person by the length of their lives neither does God measure a person by the number of imperfections. Through God's merciful and tender love Fr. Bernie is not suffering anymore and we who are saddened by the loss of Fr. Bernie can perhaps be comforted as Jesus said on the Sermon on the Mount "blessed are those who mourn, for they will be comforted." We can be comforted by knowing that Fr. Bernie served diligently and faithfully. This is a time to thank our heavenly father for giving all of us the gift of Fr. Bernie. Fr. Bernie, we thank you for the gifts you shared with all of us present, and with all of those whose lives you touched. Fr. Bernie was a companion on the earthly journey for eighty-eight years. Regardless of how long someone lives, life is never long enough. Never long enough to learn as much as one would like, never long enough to develop relationships with one another as one would like. And as Fr. Bernie has passed from this world death is never the end but only the beginning of a new chapter where through the resurrection, Christ has conquered all death and welcomes those who have gone before us in the mercy of God into God's joyous and heavenly kingdom in the

company of all the angels and saints who have gone before us in the mercy of God.