

Homily based on the readings from April 29, 2025 (Acts 4.32-37; John 3.7b-15)

It is fair to say that the Catholic community – both locally and worldwide – is in the midst of a massive transition. Within a couple of weeks, by the grace of God, we will have a new Holy Father in Rome. As most of you are aware, in just a few hours the new Bishop of Norwich – Monsignor Richard Reidy – will be ordained and installed at Saint Patrick’s Cathedral. As with any period of change, there is cause both for anxiety and for optimism. None of us can say for certain what the future will bring, but we are *acutely* aware of the challenges with which our new leaders will have to contend.

In this setting, it is helpful to be reminded – as we were in today’s first reading – of the *incredible* adversities faced by the first generation of Christians. The entire “community of believers” consisted of a tiny number of people, who pooled together their meager resources to support the ministry of the Apostles. No matter how grim our own

situation may appear – with the yoking of parishes and the scarcity of priests – it is nothing compared to what *they* had to deal with.

Monsignor James Shea, the president of the University of Mary in North Dakota, summarized the situation rather humorously:

*One can imagine [the Apostles] gathering for their first “evangelization committee meeting.”*

*Our Agenda: To bring the Gospel of Christ to the world.*

*Our Resources:*

- *Bishops? Eleven.*
- *Priests? Same number.*
- *Deacons? None.*
- *Trained theologians? None.*
- *Religious orders? None.*
- *Seminarians? None.*
- *Seminaries? None.*
- *Christian believers? A few hundred.*
- *Countries with Christians in them? One.*

- *Church buildings? None.*
- *Schools and universities? None.*
- *Written Gospels? None.*
- *Money? Very little.*
- *Experience in foreign missions? None.*
- *Influential contacts in high places? Next to none.*
- *Societal attitude toward us? Ignorant to hostile.*

The point, of course, is that – from a purely material perspective – even the most dysfunctional diocese today has infinitely more resources than the Apostles of old. I will not say that such concerns are irrelevant – because that is certainly not the case – but they are *definitely* outweighed by other factors.

One could argue, of course, that the Apostles – who were chosen and instructed by Christ himself – possessed unique abilities that no one else could possibly have. That argument can easily be rebutted, though, simply by looking at the subsequent 2000 years of the Church's history.

There is perhaps no more *amazing* example than Saint Catherine of Siena, whose memorial we celebrate today. By any reasonable metric, her efforts to reform the Church should have come to nothing; but *somehow* this tiny, uneducated laywoman from an unremarkable family – who died at the age of 33 – managed to persuade popes and convict the consciences of kings. There is no evidence, as far as I can tell, that Saint Catherine was ever intimidated by the enormity of her responsibilities. She simply performed the tasks she was given, leaving the rest to God. As she once wrote, “God requires nothing else of us except that we show our neighbors the love we have for [him].”

And so, as Christians in Connecticut – and around the world – prepare to welcome our new shepherds, let us joyfully follow in the footsteps of the saints and the Apostles – entrusting all our *cares* and *concerns* to our Risen Lord, who will satisfy our every *hunger* and provide for all our *needs*.