

**EMBER WEDNESDAY IN WHITSUN-WEEK  
EVENSONG & INSTITUTION OF NEW RECTOR  
SERMON – SAINT JOSEPH PARISH  
BISHOP WILLIAM MCCLEAN, JR.**

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*“Lord, I have loved the habitation of thy house, and the place where thine honour dwelleth.” (Psalm 26.8)*

It’s wonderful being with you all again here at Saint Joseph Parish to formally receive and institute the Reverend Father Craig Looney as your Rector. Now - not only do you have a new Rector - but also a Rector Emeritus in Father Altberg.

As I travel around - officially or unofficially - to various parishes - I find that while they all do have much in common - each parish does have its own ethos - its very own custom - or way of doing things.

So I was reminded about the priest who was supplying at another parish. He was running a little bit late - and got to the church just in time to vest and fall into the already formed procession. An usher handed him a bulletin - and he glanced at it while he was processing to the altar. His heart sank when he discovered that things were a little different here at St. Swithun’s-in-the-Marsh - than they were in his own parish. What was he going to do?

He thought for a moment - and then decided he would just wing it a little and get through the first part of the Service. All went well - and at least he went into the pulpit to preach the sermon. NOW - NOW the opportunity was in front of him. So - without thinking - he looked out over the congregation and asked: “What do I do now?”

Someone in the congregation said: “Father, you say something first - and we’ll respond.”

Again - without thinking - he said, “Well, for the first time in my ministry - I’m speechless.”

And without hesitation the congregation responded: “Thanks be to God!”

I must admit that there have been times in my ministry when I have been speechless - but not this evening.

It is indeed my great honor and privilege to be here with you this evening - as a parish

family - to share in this important event in the life of Saint Joseph Parish.

The Service of Institution into the parish is one of those Services which we don’t often have the honor of attending - and also one which we pray doesn’t come around too often in the life of the parish.

For those who just might NOT be familiar with it - the Service of Institution we used this evening has been in use in the American Church for just over two hundred years. It was adopted by the General Convention of the Church in 1804.

Historically - we know that from the earliest times in the Church - the laity played an important part in the selection of their clergy - just as you - through the duly elected members of your Vestry - have done.

In medieval times - the idea behind the Office was the presentation and induction of a priest into a benefice - that was - providing a living for the Vicar or Rector. Today - we aren’t much different - are we? Because you see - our parishes - through their Vestries - provide the Rector with a stipend - a living - or a salary if you would like to use civilian terminology.

The Induction was generally done by a layman - namely the Patron of the Benefice. When Richard the First came to the throne of England in 1189 - the Right of Institution of a priest into a benefice was transferred to the bishop of the diocese - or his duly appointed deputy. This was usually the Archdeacon of the Rural Dean. While I can say I have officiated at many of these Services - Saint Joseph Parish has the unique honor of being the farthest I have traveled for such a Service.

When we think about the Office of Institution - we can look at it as a kind of marriage. The Wardens - on behalf of the congregation - acknowledge and receive their new Rector - and present him with the keys to the church. The new Rector promises to be a faithful shepherd to the flock committed to his charge.

Father Craig has been instituted. That’s the spiritualities portion. He has also been inducted in the benefice. That’s the temporalities portion. So - the spiritualities

and the temporalities are now UNITED - in the person of the new Rector.

Think about it this way for a moment. As a congregation of the faithful - you will feed Father Craig physically by providing him with a stipend - and he will feed you spiritually through Word and Sacrament. I think you get the picture here.

Just as in a marriage - each partner supports the other. I want to give you a warning here though. Just as in a marriage - it CANNOT be a fifty-fifty proposition if it's going to work well. In reality - it must be no less than a one hundred - one hundred percent proposition. The parish must give one hundred percent and Father Craig gives one hundred percent. Now - sometimes you might think he has to give you a hundred and ten percent - or a hundred and twenty percent. I'm gonna stick my Irish neck out and say there might even be those who would expect him to do just that - but that's - not - so!

Many years ago - the late Bishop Fulton J. Sheen wrote a little book called: "Three to Get Married." I think his concept is a good one. Of course two of our three participants in this venture are different than those in the Bishop's book - but one is EXACTLY the same. Our three then are Father Craig - the congregation of Saint Joseph Parish - and of course our Lord Jesus Christ. THEY are the marriage partners here this evening.

If I were to ask you to name one of the key ingredients in any good marriage - you would probably say love - wouldn't you? To love - is to serve - as they say. Just as the clergy are to respect their Bishop - so likewise the congregation is to respect Father Craig. Serve Father Craig - but most of all - LOVE Father Craig. And he - in return - will love each of you.

In thinking about what this - sometime speechless Irishman would say this evening - I came to the conclusion that what the rector of a parish really is - is summed up for us by what Saint Francis of Assisi had to say in one on his prayers. It's one I have loved for as long as I can remember - Irish heritage notwithstanding. It is - in fact - a prayer I think many of you already know.

The parish priest - the Rector - is most assuredly an instrument of God's peace.

Where there is hatred - he will do his utmost best to turn it into love.

Where there is injury amongst you - he will do his utmost best to sow pardon and forgiveness.

Whenever you have doubts - he will show you the way - through Faith - that you might again be one with God.

When you are in despair - he will give you renewed hope in Our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. He will do all in his power to turn your sadness into joy.

Your new Rector comes to you - NOT so much to be consoled himself - but to console. To console each child of God committed to his charge - whenever the need arises. That doesn't mean nine to five - five day a week. It means twenty-four seven - three sixty-five.

He doesn't come among you in order that you may understand him - but rather that he may know and understand each of you as part of the flock now committed to his charge.

And now - we have come round full circle to where we began - haven't we? That is - Father Craig doesn't come so much to BE loved - as TO love.

Are these NOT some of the ingredients which make up a good marriage? I believe they are.

Father Craig will sing with you - and I know that for a fact for I have heard him sing - and I know he has been singing with this parish for many years. He will pray with you. He will laugh with you. He will mourn with you. He will cry with you. He will watch with you.

Without hesitation - he will do ALL these things - and more! The two things I beg each of you here this evening - is that you don't mistake his kindness for weakness and that you never take him for granted.

By his loving encouragement - and sometimes - perhaps by chastisement - I am certain that you will all grow in the Faith "once committed to the saints" and know what it truly means to be a communicant in the Anglican Catholic Church.

Each soul in Saint Joseph Parish is committed to this charge - and having known him for many years now - I know he understands the gravity of that responsibility. Through the prayer on Page 573 of the *Prayer Book* - he promised to devote himself – BODY – SOUL - and SPIRIT - to give himself TOTALLY to the service of Almighty God and this parish. But he CAN'T do it alone - and YOU can't do it alone. That's why God gave you each other.

So this evening - we have not only instituted and inducted Father Craig into the benefice of Saint Joseph Parish - but also welcomed him – OFFICIALLY - into this relationship of dedication - of love - and of service. We lift up our hearts and voices in thanksgiving to Almighty God for the new Rector of Saint Joseph Parish family.

Respect him!

Honor him!

Support him!

But most important of all...love him!

