



## DIOCESE OF FORT WORTH THE BISHOP'S OFFICE



### **The White Mass St. Patrick's Cathedral October 18, 2011 The Feast of St. Luke**

Dear Brothers and Sisters in the Lord,

Welcome once again this year to St. Patrick's Cathedral. The "White Mass" belongs to a series of Eucharistic Liturgies that are unique to the Church in the United States in the contemporary world in many ways: The "Red Mass" for the legal profession; the "Blue Mass" for those in law enforcement, and the "White Mass" for health care professionals. The "White Mass" can be described as a *"customary description for a liturgy for health care workers. Traditionally, health care workers wore white attire. In the Church, the color white in the Liturgy symbolizes hope and comfort to the ill and hospitalized."* The White Mass can be held around the feast day of Our Lady of Lourdes in February -quite appropriate because of the message of healing associated with Lourdes -and around the feast day of St. Luke -who is known as the patron of physicians and health care workers. Tradition considers St. Luke to have been a physician from Syria, because of his attention to medical details (such as during the Passion), and also because of his attention to the healing miracles of Christ. At any rate, for these reasons, and more, it is a blessing and a privilege to have you with us again this year, especially as we seek to work together to build up the Catholic physicians association and associations of related health care professions where Catholic professionals can be found. As you know, as a former health care worker, this for me is an important work for our Diocese.

I may have mentioned this in the past, and if I have, I ask your patience. But one of the reflections that led me to respond to what I believed was a call to priestly ministry was indeed my experience as a medical technologist. One aspect of this was certainly being "up close and personal" with suffering and death, but the other was the realization that in the names of the slips on the test requisitions, the blood counts, CBCs, "Chern 6s" and other tests at that time [which surely seem ancient now] was a real human person who was either sick, suffering, or dying. Thus, I could not separate the person and his or her life from the tests that I was doing. The spiritual could not be taken apart from the physical. We are certainly living in a time when there seems to be many efforts to do this: whether from the misunderstanding of the use of technology, from governmental and political motives, the lack of resources or whatever. Yet on this feast day of St. Luke, as the disciples are sent forth to "proclaim the Kingdom of God", all of you are sent forth to proclaim the Kingdom of God daily in your profession and ministry of health care: to teach and remind those around you of the sacred reality of the human person created in the image and likeness of God, whose lives here and ultimate destiny belong to God, and not to humanity. As laity and Catholic health care professionals, the Second Vatican Council would say that the Lord sends you on the Church's apostolate, *"an apostolate that must all the time be adapting itself to the needs of the moment; he sends them on an*

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*apostolate where they are to show themselves his cooperators, doing their full share continually in the work of their Lord, knowing that in the Lord their labor cannot be lost." (Second Vatican Council, AA 33)*

Being sent forth these days to proclaim the Kingdom of God as Catholic Health Care professionals, means proclaiming the redemptive value of suffering, the value of every human person created in the image and likeness of God, and the absolute necessity of freedom of conscience and religious liberty, which are being called into question and under threats and duress. And, it means in these struggles to be like St. Paul and know that "the Lord stood by me and gave me strength so that through me the proclamation might be completed." As He did for St. Paul, so He does for us. And as he stands by us to give us strength in the proclamation of the Gospel by ministry and the health care profession, so too, as in the words of Pope Benedict in 2005, "*service to the suffering and the defense of life are vocations with a deep religious dimension.*"

Thank you once again for being with us this evening. This former Med Tech and now Bishop is grateful to the Lord for the witness to the Gospel of Life that you all give. May we, with the Lord's help, work together in the months and years ahead to strengthen that witness.

God bless you always,

+ Most Reverend Bishop Kevin Vann

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