



**Most Rev. Robert D. Gruss  
Bishop of Rapid City**

REDEDICATION OF TERRA SANCTA  
MASS OF SOLEMN BLESSING HOMILY

Holy Cross Chapel – Terra Sancta

May 10, 2012

Good evening to everyone. Welcome, welcome to all of you. What a grace it is this evening for all of us to be here on this holy ground – Terra Sancta. Holy Ground for Holy People. A holy place for holy people. A holy place where the Lord Jesus will encounter us and we Him. “A place where people of all ages come to find and celebrate what is holy in their lives.” [Campaign material]

Isn't this an inspiring place? Both the retreat center and the school? What a beautiful facility! We are truly blessed!

Today is a very proud moment in the life and future of the Diocese of Rapid City. The dream that was dreamt five or six years ago has been realized by God's grace, by your sacrifices, by the many prayers, and through the generosity of many, many people. We are truly blessed!

As Bishop Cupich stated five years ago, “*We need each other to achieve our potential as Catholics. We are one family with an exciting opportunity to respond boldly to the priorities established in the Synod 2002:*” faith formation, strengthening families, worship and parish communities, stewardship of our resources, vocations social justice issues, Catholic schools, and religious education.

We have seen and are now experiencing what a family of faith can make happen by coming together with a common vision. Obviously the vision is not yet fully complete, but in this beautiful facility – retreat center and school – together we have moved forward in achieving our potential.

In every place and time, in every community, God has a plan, a plan which is so often built upon the faith and prayers of others who have left their mark, who have left their faith, who have left their legacy.

A life of faith and service to God and to others which the Benedictine Sisters of St. Martin began here on this site in 1962 – their legacy of faith built upon the solid rock of Jesus Christ, “our cornerstone” – has now been passed onto our generation and the many generations to follow.

The primacy of the Gospel of Jesus Christ will continue to be built on this solid foundation for many years to come. God has provided and you have responded! You have responded in faith, a faith born out of your own relationship with the Lord and your own desire to serve Him.

As the Gospel this evening states in so many words, no matter what the challenges we face, no matter how hard the wind blows, or how hard the rains come down, those who keep their trust and faith in the Lord are set solidly on the Rock of Jesus Christ. Terra Sancta is that rock, that solid

foundation. As seen in the classrooms of all of our schools, **“Be it known to all who enter here that Christ is the reason for this school. He is the unseen but ever-present teacher in its classes. He is the body of its faculty and the inspiration of its students.”** And we can also say, “He is the reason for Terra Sancta. **He is the unseen but ever-present teacher here at Terra Sancta.** And He is the reason why we are here tonight.”

My friends, your faith is inspiring! When we look at the description of faith in the Letter to the Hebrews, we find, *“Faith is the **confident assurance** concerning what we hope for, and **conviction** about things we do not see.”* Terra Sancta fulfills a hope and a dream and a vision. The Diocese of Rapid City – all of you – stepped out to *“walk by faith”* with a conviction, “yes, we can do this.”

The monies raised in a small mission diocese in the worst economy since the depression is pretty astounding and it speaks volumes of the faith of our people. It speaks volumes of the dedication and work ethic of our people. It speaks volumes of the desire to provide a place and opportunity where people, young and old, rich and poor, Catholic and non-Catholic alike to encounter the Lord Jesus more deeply in their lives. This is a vision far beyond bricks and mortar.

As one Steering Committee member stated, *“We are on our way to heaven. God has given us His Son, Jesus Christ, to save us from our sins and lead us to the Kingdom of God. We follow Him, and we certainly walk by faith.”*

*Our first duty as Catholics is to do whatever we can to bring others with us. We are to live our faith and share our faith in every way we can.”*

So yes, we have walked by faith and continue to do so with Christ as our leader and foundation. People of faith can do great things... marvelous things... even miraculous things.

We still have a ways to go to complete the project, but through continued hard work, prayer and living our faith, the Lord will bring our work, our sacrifices, our dedication to fruitful completion.

I hope that all of you have had the opportunity to walk through the building to see the beautiful renovation of the school and the old monastery, which is now the retreat center. Renovations can sometimes be a great challenge. Renovations can sometimes be very difficult... and hard decisions have to be made. Just speak to Fr. Steve Biegler who did a magnificent job in leading this project at Terra Sancta. Thank you for your efforts. But I also believe that these challenges which have born great fruit have been guided by the Holy Spirit “who makes all things new.”

Holy places are always a place of encounter – a place to encounter the Lord in a very personal way. All of Terra Sancta, whether it be in the school classrooms or on the playground, whether it be in the retreat center or on the wilderness trails, in the quiet of the chapels or in the quiet of the beautiful guest rooms, or with a community at meals, all are a place for encountering the Lord alone or through others. But we can be sure that this Holy Place is a place of encounter. Encounters with the Lord change us. Encounters with the Lord empower us. Encounters with the Lord renew us.

The word “renovation” comes from the Latin word *renovare*, from *re + novare*, from *novus* or new. In other words, *renew or to be made new*. The renovation of Terra Sancta is almost complete.

The renovation of our hearts and our lives has now begun here on this Holy Ground... where all who come here will be made new. The Lord said, I will make all things new.”

Our world, our culture, our humanity, our lives are in great need of renovation. The renovation takes place one person at a time... one encounter with the Lord at a time.

We now have a special place for this in western South Dakota, in these beautiful Black Hills. As we heard in the Book of Revelation, *“I will show you the bride, the wife of the Lamb. He took me in spirit to a great high mountain and showed me the holy city coming down out of heaven from God. It gleamed with the splendor of God. For the glory of God gave it light and its lamp was the Lamb.”*

At the heart of our renovation is the intimate encounter with the “Glory of God, the Lamb who takes away the sins of the world – Jesus. As I said earlier, this is what Terra Sancta is all about – the “Glory of God, the Lamb – Jesus. In the end, this is what really matters.

When we put our complete faith in God, and allow the Holy Spirit to work through our lives, we will be swept away in God’s abundant graces to destinations beyond our wildest dreams...and God will use our generosity to provide abundance for others. That is precisely what happened in the early Church as it began after Pentecost. This is what has happened here. Many believed that this dream could become a reality; that this vision would lead to new possibilities – a New Jerusalem.

God’s great favor to us is what we experience tonight here at Terra Sancta, this holy ground. We have no idea how the Lord will touch the hearts and lives of those who come through these doors for quiet and prayer or for a Catholic education... but we do know it will be a place for encounter.

**As a saying goes, “What we have *dreamt* today will guide us through the *mystery* of tomorrow.”** But in that mystery we can be assured that God is always full of surprises... and miracles.

So we gather around this altar tonight to give thanks. And the miracle of Jesus comes among us once again in his Body and Blood. We surrender our hearts in gratitude that He not only provided us with this tremendous gift and opportunity of Terra Sancta, but He continues to renew us each time we gather as a community for prayer. We are truly blessed and we have so much for which to be grateful.

*“Blessed are those who dwell in your house! They never cease to praise you.”*