

**Homily – Funeral Mass for Sr. Agnes Bochenek, OLS
Immaculate Conception Church – January 30, 2023**

A deep hope beats in our hearts to live forever. As opposed to wishing or simply desiring, hope transforms those who trust in the Lord. That was the obvious case in Sr. Agnes' life. She devoted it to her spouse, our Lord, and to the mission he entrusted to us, to make disciples from every nation. May her faithful dedication to the mission of the Church become even more fruitful in heaven, helping all of us to become better fishers of men.

Even as it is inevitable to suffer the physical loss of someone loved, we cannot extinguish the hope in a Life that is written with capital letters. For Sr. Agnes, Life was Christ, the great Living One. *“As gold in the furnace,”* God proves us today, as he proved Sr. Agnes through the evangelical counsels. As sacrificial offerings, He attracts us to himself.

We come together as the Body of Christ to offer the only worthy sacrifice to the Father, by the work of the Holy Spirit. We celebrate the Paschal Mystery of Christ in thanksgiving for Sr. Agnes' life and for an increase in the faith that we shared with her. We thank the Father for giving us Sr. Agnes, and we thank Him in her name for everything she received from Him. She was a gift for us and for Jesus through the Church. We pray that, as she shared in the Lord's death, she may become a gift, an eternal offering with the Son to the Father. May the Lord attract her to himself on the cross, for her to have eternal life and be raised by Him on the last day.

Today we experience the longing for that Life in a very special way. We stumble before the wall of death, but through the witness of

Sr. Agnes' life, we are strengthened in our belief of this – which Pope Francis has articulated in a very meaningful way: *“God’s work of love is stronger than the work of death. It is of that love, it is precisely of that love, that we must make ourselves hard-working ‘accomplices’, with our faith!”* Jesus will give us back to our loved ones when we meet again. We have come to pray for the Lord to give us back Sr. Agnes when we meet again.

The life of Sr. Agnes bears witness that death does not have the last word. She dedicated her life to the Living God, so we can only begin to imagine for her a life that is far beyond our imagination and expectations. A journey that began with her baptism has come to an end, but as we remember the goodness of her soul, we are strengthened in the hope for that end to be a new beginning. The celebration of her life renews our own faith and hope, so we are invited to imitate the love that she strove to live by.

I wish to express my gratitude, in the name of the Church, for her many years of loving service. Her generosity made her constantly present in archdiocesan celebrations and events. She was a faithful spouse of Christ. She combined a great intellect with great courage and determination in decision-making. She was a conscientious servant leader. We thank the Holy Spirit for her witness of faith, even amidst the struggles of life, as she kept her eyes fixed on Christ, crucified and risen.

Our Lady of Czestochowa, we entrust Sr. Agnes to you, as we hope you lead her to the Father’s eternal embrace.