

FUNERAL MASS HOMILY**SISTER EDITH PRENDERGAST, R.S.C.****April 27, 2026****Cathedral of Our Lady of the Angels****Cardinal Roger Mahony**

My dear friends in Christ,

We gather this morning with hearts that are full—full of gratitude for a life poured out in love, full of sorrow at the loss of a cherished sister and friend, and full of hope in the promises of our faith. We come as the Church always comes in the face of death: standing before the mystery of God’s mercy, listening to the Word of God, and placing our Sister Edith Prendergast into the arms of the Good Shepherd she loved so deeply.

A funeral Mass homily is not a eulogy. It is an act of faith. And today’s Scriptures trace, with remarkable beauty, the journey every disciple must walk—a journey from hearing the Word to living in communion with Christ. It is also the journey Sister Edith spent her entire life helping others to walk.

Jeremiah gives us the first step: “Blessed is the one who trusts in the Lord... like a tree planted beside the waters.” The spiritual life begins not with knowledge, but with trust—a steady confidence that God is faithful, that God is near, that God sustains us even in seasons of drought.

Catechesis, at its heart, is the art of teaching people to trust God. Not simply to know about God, but to root their lives in God. This is the soil in which every vocation grows—marriage, priesthood, religious life, and the ministry of the baptized.

Sister Edith understood this with her whole being. Her ministry—whether in classrooms, parishes, or the Office of Religious Education—was always about forming trusting disciples, people whose roots reached into the living water of God’s love. And in her final illness, a long and difficult “year of drought,” her trust did not wither. Her roots were deep. She remained that blessed tree—steady, faithful, and fruitful.

If Jeremiah teaches trust, Psalm 23 teaches relationship. “The Lord is my shepherd... he leads me... he restores my soul.” The Psalm is not about the sheep’s accomplishments. It is about the Shepherd’s fidelity.

Catechesis is helping people learn to recognize the Shepherd's voice—in Scripture, in prayer, in the Eucharist and Sacraments, and in the life of the Church.

This was the heart of Sister Edith's ministry. Through her leadership of the Religious Education Congress—Youth Day, the workshops, the liturgies, the gatherings of tens of thousands—she helped the People of God hear that voice more clearly.

Congress was never simply an event. It was a place of green pastures and restful waters, a place where the Shepherd restored souls and guided hearts. And in her final months, when she walked through the valley of the shadow of death, she did so with the same Shepherd she had proclaimed all her life.

St. Paul's prayer in Ephesians brings us to the next movement: "May you be strengthened with power through his Spirit in the inner self... that you may know the love of Christ that surpasses knowledge."

This is the goal of all catechesis: not merely to inform the mind, but to strengthen the inner self, to awaken the heart to the vastness of Christ's love. Paul's language is expansive—breadth, length, height, depth—because Christ's love cannot be contained.

Under Sister Edith's leadership, the Religious Education Congress became a place where this prayer was answered year after year. It was not a conference of ideas. It was a school of the Spirit, a place where catechists, teachers, youth ministers, and parish leaders were renewed in the inner self and sent forth with courage.

We are drawn to Jesus "who is able to accomplish far more than all we ask or imagine, by the power at work within us."

This is the vision of the Second Vatican Council alive and flourishing: a Church where the gifts of women and men, religious and lay, build up the Body of Christ.

When Monsignor Lloyd Torgerson transitioned from serving as our Archdiocesan Director to become Pastor of St. Monica's Parish, the presumption was that I would appoint another qualified priest to take the reins.

But the prompting of the Second Vatican Council through the Spirit led me to chart a new direction. I appointed a woman Religious as Director of the Office of Religious Education. It was a moment of grace for our local Church—a recognition that the Spirit had already equipped Sister Edith with the wisdom, the faith, the vision, and the love needed for that ministry. And she carried that responsibility with a joy and generosity that lifted the whole Church.

All of this leads to the Gospel, where Jesus reveals the destination of the journey: “I am the bread of life... whoever eats this bread will live forever.”

“For my flesh is true food, and my blood is true drink” to sustain us on our journey as disciples and apostles of Jesus.

Everything in the Christian life leads here: trust in God, following the Shepherd, being strengthened in love, and communion with Christ. Catechesis that does not lead to the Eucharist stops short of its goal.

Sister Edith knew this. Her life’s work was to guide people along this path—from hearing the Word to living in communion with the Word made flesh.

But the journey does not end at communion. Communion always leads to mission. The Eucharist is not only the summit of the Christian life; it is also the source. We are fed with the Bread of Life so that we may become bread for the world.

This was the deeper purpose of the Religious Education Congress. It was never meant to be a retreat from the world. It was a sending forth into the world.

Year after year, tens of thousands from every corner of the world came to Anaheim to be renewed in the Spirit—to be set on fire again with the mission of Jesus, to be strengthened for the work of evangelization, to be sent home to parishes, schools, families, and communities as bearers of the Gospel.

Sister Edith believed passionately that every baptized person shares in the mission of Christ. She helped the Church in Los Angeles—and far beyond—to understand that catechesis is not complete until it becomes apostolic, until it sends people forth to bring Christ to all nations, beginning with their own neighborhoods.

Her ministry formed not only disciples, but missionary disciples.

But let us not forget something essential: Sister Edith believed in you. She believed in the Church gathered here today—catechists, teachers, parish leaders, clergy, religious, parents, grandparents, young people, and all who serve the Gospel in countless hidden ways. She believed that the Spirit had already given you everything needed to build up the Body of Christ.

Her life was a radiant reminder that ministry is not reserved for a few. It is the vocation of the whole People of God. And today, as we commend her to the Lord, she hands that mission back to us with a smile, with confidence, and with the same gentle encouragement she offered throughout her life:

Trust God. Listen for the Shepherd. Let Christ's love take root in you. And go—go and set hearts on fire.

So, we leave our Cathedral not only with sadness, but with gratitude. Not only with loss, but with renewed purpose. We carry with us the memory of a woman whose joy, wisdom, and courage helped shape the Church we love. And we carry the mission she cherished—to form disciples, to proclaim the Gospel, to be bread for the world.

May she rest in the peace of the Shepherd she loved!

May she rejoice in the communion she longed for!

In that wonderful Irish tradition, may she dance and leap through the poetry she now embodies!

And may her memory strengthen us—each in our own ministry, each in our own corner of the vineyard—as we continue the work she embraced with her whole heart.

Amen.