



SUNDAY REFLECTION

The Eucharist is the 'mystery of our faith': Christ has died, Christ is risen, Christ will come again. This mystery is within us in a special way at this moment when we receive the risen Christ within us as our food and drink, the means of our new life in the new creation. Christ within us is the hope of future glory, the final manifestation of the kingdom of God which will come about when, and only when, everyone has become perfect through the living of the mystery. Our communion with Christ in the Eucharist, completing our listening to God's Word in the Liturgy of the Word, impels us practice the mystery in our daily lives as, at the end of our celebration, we are sent out to love and serve the Lord.

STEWARDSHIP: Today's readings speak of hospitality. Abraham, who cheerfully did for his guests all that desert hospitality required, was rewarded with his heart's desire – a son. Martha also busied herself with all the details of hospitality, but grudgingly and with complaint. Am I a cheerful or a grudging giver?

Ralph W. Emerson

“Go oft to the house of thy friend, for weeds choke the unused path.

READINGS FOR THE SEVENTEENTH SUNDAY

28 JUL '19

Gn. 18:20-32: The encounter between the Lord and Abraham illuminates the mercy and justice of God. Both God and Abraham are aware of the sinfulness of the people but the story is not yet over because human life is at stake. Justice calls for action, but mercy beckons patience since innocent lives remain even in the midst of the weakness and imperfection of others.

Col. 2:12-14: Paul offers here a brief theology of Baptism and a challenge to the notion of inherited sin. It is through belief in God that we are made His children and our sins are forgiven in Christ who was nailed to the cross and rose from the dead. We rejoice in such freedom as the children of God.

Lk. 11:1-13: We hear the words of the Lord’s Prayer with fresh ears this day, in a seamless transition from our time to the earliest days of the Church. Confidence in our prayer leads us to realize that God always responds – even in ways we least expect or demand from Him.

Ralph W. Sockman

“Our love for God is tested by the question of whether we seek Him or His gifts.”

GESTURES & POSTURES Continued

Bowing

“Bowing” is indicated repeatedly in the *General Instruction of the Roman Missal* (GIRM), the Church’s directives for the celebration of the Mass, but No. 275 offers a helpful summary of this posture:

“A bow signifies reverence and honor shown to the persons themselves or to the signs that represent them. There are two kinds of bow: a bow of the head and a bow of the body.

“a) A bow of the head is made when the three Divine Persons are named together and at the names of Jesus, of the Blessed Virgin Mary, and of the Saint in whose honor Mass is being celebrated.

“b) A bow of the body, that is to say, a profound bow, is made to the altar; during the prayers *Munda cor meum* (Cleanse my heart) and *In spiritu humilitatis* (With humble spirit); in the Creed at the words *et incarnatus est* (and by the Holy Spirit . . . and became man); in the Roman Canon at the *Supplices te rogamus* (In humble prayer we ask you, almighty God). The same kind of bow is made by the Deacon when he asks for a blessing before the proclamation of the Gospel. In addition, the Priest bows slightly as he pronounces the words of the Lord at the Consecration.”

There are three kinds of bows. (I hope all these distinctions aren’t confusing. In fact, they’re rather useful).

a. There’s the simple bow of the head that we use at the Name of Jesus. During the Mass, that head bow is also used at the Name of Mary, and at the Name of the Holy Father.

b. There's a medium bow of the head and the shoulders. In monasteries we use that bow to greet another monk in order to honor the presence of Christ in our brothers. That is, when we process into choir, as we get to the center and split doff to go to our choir stalls, after bowing to the altar we bow to one another: a medium bow.

c. Then there's a profound bow, bending the entire body at the waist, touching the knees with the palms of the hand. That bow is used when the deacon asks the priest for a blessing before reading the Gospel, when a monk asks the abbot for a blessing, or in the Liturgy of the Hours, whenever there is a Glory Be. At the doxology after every psalm, all the monks in choir make a profound bow in honor of the Trinity. This comes from the Rule of St. Benedict, where he says: "After the third lesson (he's talking about one of the nocturnes of Vigils) let the cantor intone the Gloria Patri, and as soon as he begins, let all rise in honor and reverence for the Most Holy Trinity." (RB 9).

For guests who aren't accustomed to monastic ceremonial, it's a very impressive thing to see all the monks in choir practically disappear into the choir stalls as they all make a profound bow for every doxology. Another instance for this kind of bow—as I mentioned—is whenever we pass in front of the altar, as a way of saluting Our Lord, for the altar always represents Christ. Try it next time you pass in front of the altar (that is, if the Blessed Sacrament is not there). Bend right in two, all the way down. Slowly, reverently. It is the Lord Himself you are greeting.

Genuflecting—a "half-kneel"

This gesture is related to kneeling, but you can think of it as a quick kneel, or a "half-kneel", since you only bend one knee, not both, and immediately get up again. When I say "a quick kneel", I don't mean that you should do it in a hurry! Sometimes when people go into their pew, you see them make a little bob that vaguely resembles a genuflection. No. If physically able the right knee goes all the way down to the floor, there is a pause and then we rise back up. During this movement the back is kept straight, and for balance, the individual might want to place both hands on the left knee. It can help!

but actually these bodily gestures have become foreign to us, and we need to re-learn them with a new deliberateness. To do it well, you have to be conscious of what you're doing. We have to be taught.

You know after the consecration of both the Host and the Chalice, the priest genuflects in adoration. Once again barring physical limitations. If the genuflection cannot be performed a profound bow is made. You may have noticed this when a group of priest is concelebrating with the bishop, when he genuflects they perform a profound bow. You may have also noticed that Pope St. John Paul II and Pope Emeritus Benedict XVI had a hard time doing this, as many older people do, because of arthritis or a once-broken hip or some other physical difficulty. For Pope St. John Paul, it costs him something to genuflect. But he griped the altar bravely, and forced himself to bend all the way down to the floor. And then the Master of Ceremonies would help him back up. Why did he go to so much pain and trouble? Because of love. He loved the Lord present in the Blessed Sacrament. If the Holy Father could/can make this gesture at such great personal cost, can we who are healthy do any less?

ALTAR Continued

CANDLES

The use of lights as an adjunct to worship goes back to the beginning of the Church, and even farther. Among the Jews and in many pagan rites the use of lights had long been looked upon as appropriate in connection with public homage to their God or gods. It is probable that among Christians they were first employed simply to dispel darkness, when the sacred mysteries were celebrated before dawn, as was the custom, or in the gloom of the catacombs; but the beautiful symbolism of their use was soon recognized by the writers of the early Church.

Even though candles no longer have a practical purpose, the Church still requires their use in the liturgy.

With the exception of the Easter Vigil and the Advent Rorate Masses, in modern celebrations of the Mass, candles typically do not retain their former practical purpose of illuminating a darkened space. Yet, the *General Instruction of the Roman Missal* (GIRM) states, "The candles, which are required at every liturgical service out of reverence and on account of the festiveness of the celebration, are to be appropriately placed either on or around the altar."

This raises the question: If candles serve no practical purpose, why does the Church insist on using them in the 21st century?

Candles have always been used in the Church in a symbolic way.

Light is pure; it penetrates darkness; it moves with incredible velocity; it nourishes life; it illumines all that comes under its influence. Therefore it is a fitting symbol of God, the All Pure, the Omnipresent, the Vivifier of all things, the Source of all grace and enlightenment. It represents also our Blessed Savior and His mission. He was "the Light of the world," (Jn. 8:12), to enlighten "them that sit in darkness and in the shadow of death." (Lk. 1:79), Mt. 4:16).

1 Jn. 1:5 "This is the message we have heard from Him and proclaim to you, that God is light and in Him there is no darkness at all."

Even the use of wax has its symbolic meaning. The earlier Fathers of the Church endeavored always to seek out the mystical significance of Christian practices, and one of them thus explains the reason for the Church's law requiring candles to be of wax:

"The wax, being spotless, represents Christ's most spotless Body; the wick enclosed in it is an image of His Soul, while the glowing flame typifies the Divine Nature united with the human in one Divine Person."

The Paschal Candle is a special candle used during the Easter Season to represent the resurrected Christ. During the Easter Vigil, this candle is lighted from a new fire and carried into the darkened church by a deacon or priest. The darkness represents the world without God, and the candle is the light of God returning because of Christ's resurrection. Then people following in procession light small candles, tapers, off the large one which eventually illuminates the church. This candle is also used at baptism and a funeral. (Paschal Candles also have special decorations to indicate who is represented.)

In addition, the flame, and thus fire, is a symbol of God according to scripture:

Acts 7:30-33 "Now when forty years had passed, an angel appeared to him in the wilderness of Mount Sinai, in the flame of a burning bush. When Moses saw it, he was amazed at the sight; and as he approached to look, there came the voice of the Lord: 'I

am the God of your ancestors, the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob.' Moses began to tremble and did not dare to look. Then the Lord said to him, 'Take off the sandals from your feet, for the place where you are standing is holy ground.'

Matt. 3:11 "I baptize you with water for repentance, but one who is more powerful than I is coming after me; I am not worthy to carry His sandals. He will baptize you with the Holy Spirit and fire."

Acts 2:1-4 "When the day of Pentecost had come, they were all together in one place. And suddenly from heaven there came a sound like the rush of a violent wind, and it filled the entire house where they were sitting. Divided tongues, as of fire, appeared among them, and a tongue rested on each of them. All of them were filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak in other languages, as the Spirit gave them ability."

Deut. 4:32-33 "For ask now about former ages, long before your own, ever since the day that God created human beings on the earth; ask from one end of heaven to the other: has anything so great as this ever happened or has its like ever been heard of? Has any people ever heard the voice of a god speaking out of a fire, as you have heard, and lived?"

1Kgs. 18: 24 [Elijah said] "then you call on the name of your god and I will call on the name of the LORD; the god who answers by fire is indeed God." All the people answered, "Well spoken!"

Ps. 68:2 "As smoke is driven away, so drive them away; as wax melts before the fire, let the wicked perish before God."

Heb. 12:29 "...for indeed our God is a consuming fire."

Rev. 2:18 "These are the words of the Son of God, who has eyes like a flame of fire..." [Therefore, the candles burning next to the ambo or altar should remind us especially of the tongues of fire that appeared above the apostles when the Holy Spirit descended on them at Pentecost. Just as God was present in them, he is present in the Word of God, and at the altar during the liturgy of the Eucharist.]

There are some who also point to the use of candles as a remembrance of the early Christians who celebrated Mass in the catacombs by candlelight. It is said that this should remind us of the sacrifice they made as well as the possibility that we too could be in a similar situation, celebrating Mass under threat of persecution.

Besides offering a meditation on light, candles in the Catholic Church are traditionally made of beeswax. According to the [Catholic Encyclopedia](#), "The pure wax extracted by bees from flowers symbolizes the pure flesh of Christ received from His Virgin Mother, the wick signifies the soul of Christ, and the flame represents His divinity." The requirement to use candles that

are, at the very least partially made with beeswax, is still present in the Church on account of this ancient symbolism.

Candles also have been used to add a more festive character to the celebration of Mass. According to the GIRM, "The altar is to be covered with at least one white cloth. In addition, on or next to the altar are to be placed candlesticks with lighted candles: at least two in any celebration, or even four or six, especially for a Sunday Mass or a Holy Day of Obligation, or if the Diocesan Bishop celebrates, then seven candlesticks with lighted candles."

The number of candles is meant to remind the faithful that there is something different about a certain day and should spike the interest of those present.

In the end, while candles may seem antiquated and unnecessary, the Church believes that the natural beauty of candles can have a spiritual impact on our souls. The Church, in her wisdom, realizes the power behind the symbolism of using candles and how they can reignite a drooping spirit and fill it with the fire of divine love.

SAINT OF THE WEEK BRIGID of SWEDEN d. 1373 23 JUL

Wife and foundress, also called Bridget, Birgitta, or Brigitta. She was born in 1303, the daughter of Briger Persson, the governor of Upland, Sweden, and his second wife, Ingelbard Bengsdotter. Her mother died when Brigid was twelve, and the child was raised by an aunt at Aspenas. She was married at fourteen to Ulf Gugmarsson, a Swedish prince. They had eight children, one of whom was St. Catherine of Sweden, and they lived happily together for twenty-eight years. In 1335, Brigid became a lady-in-waiting to Blanche of Namur, Queen of France, the bride of King Magnus II (r. Norway 1319-1355 and Sweden 1319-1365). In 1340, after the death of her youngest son, Brigid made a pilgrimage to the shrine of St. Olaf in Norway and then went to Compostela in Spain with her husband, Ulf Gudmarsson. He became ill on the journey but recovered as St. Denis had assured her in a vision. Ulf died in 1344 at the Cistercian monastery at Alvostra, and Brigid remained there for four years, receiving many spiritual graces in visions and revelations. In founding the monastery of Wadstena, Sweden, and the Order of the Most Holy Trinity, the Brigittines, Brigid established the intellectual center of the nation in that era. In 1349, Brigid left "Sweden, having refused to support King Magnus' crusade against Latvia and Estonia. She went to Rome, where she became well-known for her prophecies and revelations. Pope Urban V (r. 1362-1370) approved the constitution of the Brigittines in 1370. Brigid was unsuccessful, however, in persuading Urban or his successor, Gregory XI (r. 1370-1378), to leave Avignon, France and return to Rome.

During a pilgrimage to the Holy Land, her son Charles came down with a fever and died. Brigid continued her pilgrimage and returned home in 1372. She died in Rome on July 23, 1373, and her remains were transferred to Wadstena by St. Catherine, her daughter. Canonized in 1291, Brigid was made co-patroness of Europe, with St. Catherine of Siena and St. Edith Stein, on October 1, 1999, by Pope John Paul II.

PRAYER

Night Prayer of St. Bridget

O Lord, make haste and illumine the night. Say to my soul that nothing happens without You permitting it, and that nothing of what You permit is without comfort. O Jesus, Son of God, You

Who were silent in the presence of Your accusers, restrain my tongue until I find what I should say and how to say it. Show me the way and make me ready to follow it. It is dangerous to delay, yet perilous to go forward. Answer my petition and show me the way. As the wounded go to the doctor in search of aid, so do I come to You. O Lord, give Your peace to my heart. Amen.

My Nature is Fire” by St. Catherine of Siena

In your nature, eternal Godhead, I shall come to know my nature. And what is my nature, boundless love? It is fire, because you are nothing but a fire of love. And you have given humankind a share in this nature, for by the fire of love you created us. And so with all other people and every created thing; you made them out of love. O ungrateful people! What nature has your God given you? His very own nature! Are you not ashamed to cut yourself off from such a noble thing through the guilt of deadly sin? O eternal Trinity, my sweet love! You, light, give us light. You, wisdom, give us wisdom. You, supreme strength, strengthen us. Today, eternal God, let our cloud be dissipated so that we may perfectly know and follow your Truth in truth, with a free and simple heart. God, come to our assistance! Lord, make haste to help us!

A prayer before logging onto the internet:

Almighty and eternal God, who created us in Thine image and bade us to seek after all that is good, true and beautiful, especially in the divine person of Thine Only-begotten Son, our Lord Jesus Christ, grant, we beseech Thee, that, through the intercession of Saint Isidore, Bishop and Doctor, during our journeys through the internet we will direct our hands and eyes only to that which is pleasing to Thee and treat with charity and patience all those souls whom we encounter. Through Christ our Lord. Amen.



