

PASTOR'S MEANDERINGS
SIXTH SUNDAY IN ORDINARY TIME (A)

15 – 16 FEBRUARY 2020



SUNDAY REFLECTION

Speak, Lord, Your servant is listening.

I listen to You speak to me in nature, telling me that You care for all things

I listen to You speak to me in Scripture, telling me about Jesus and about how to live.

I listen to You speak to me in people, telling me of their needs and my weakness.

I listen to You speak to me in my pain and sorrow, telling me that You died on the cross and are with me always.

I listen to You speak to me in my own heart, telling me that of the lovely things God has prepared for those who love Him.

Speak, Lord, Your servant is listening.

You have the words of eternal life.

STEWARDSHIP: Stewardship involves more than just the gift we bring to the altar. Today's readings say clearly that it is fidelity to God's law that makes our offering acceptable.

READINGS FOR THE SEVENTH SUNDAY

23 FEB '20

Lv. 19:1-2, 17-18: The Lord commissions His people to imitate Him in holiness, and shows that love is the heart of both divine and human law.

1 Cor. 3:16-23: The heart of St. Paul's teaching is the indwelling of the Trinity within us. Here he uses the illustration of our bodies being temples of the Holy Spirit.

Mt. 5:38-48: Jesus renews the call to holiness and shows some of the practical applications necessary.

CHURCH DESIGN AND FURNISHINGS Continued

Narthex (or "Vestibule")

A true narthex is either an outside, covered porch-like structure or an inside area separated from the nave (the "body" of the church) by a screen, but this word has come to mean "entry" or "foyer." Originally, penitents and Catechumens were confined to this area until their reconciliation with or initiation into the Church. A westwork (or "westwerk") is the front of a large cathedral that has a tall facade and, usually, towers and an upper chamber (imagine the front entry of Notre Dame Cathedral in Paris with its towers and sculpture).

THE MASS

The Mass in the Early Church

As we approach the Lenten Season (only ten days from this weekend) this would seem to be an appropriate time to begin a more thorough investigation of the Mass (The Source and Summit of our faith), its antecedents, our involvement in its celebration and how are we gifted through that involvement. This will be a gradual process of searching out its historical development and exploring the various parts of the Mass their meaning and development.

There is a rather common misunderstanding about the Mass, that what we celebrate today is nothing at all like the early Christians practiced or would recognize. This is the view of many, perhaps most outside of the Church and unfortunately by some within it. The premise being that what we have been celebrating whether in the Extraordinary Form (what is also referred to as the Tridentine Rite) or the Ordinary Form which we celebrate here at St. Stephen's is somehow based on some ceremony patched together during the superstitions of the Middle Ages. This also accompanied by the belief that the Mass of the early Church was considerably less formal. In reality the truth is that the Church did not invent the Mass hundreds of years after Christ but was given the Eucharist by Christ Himself. In fact, the early Church was remarkably similar to what we Catholics believe and practice today. When we take the time to actually look at the historical record, especially through the witness of the early Church, this fact becomes evident. While there have been changes and developments over the centuries, most of us have lived through them, the Mass has stayed constant in its essential substance from the beginning.

Biblical Foundations

It is difficult to discuss the development of the Mass without making reference to its scriptural origins. The Bible provides the foundational witness for the beginnings of the Catholic liturgy. We must look to the Old Testament to provide a backdrop for the development of the liturgy. The Mass emerged out of Jewish sacrificial customs, instituted in the Old Testament. When the Israelites were in slavery in Egypt, God sent Moses to rescue them. Through Moses, God instructed them to sacrifice unblemished male lamb in the prime of its life. The flesh of the lamb was to be eaten entirely, alongside wine and unleavened bread, and its blood was to be painted onto the wooden doorposts of the Israelites. In this first Passover, the lamb's blood

marked the houses of the Israelites, saving them from the death that God wrought for the firstborn sons of the Egyptians (Exodus 11). God then commanded the Israelites to celebrate the Passover continually, that they may remember the salvation brought to them by God. In Jewish tradition, the continual celebration of the Passover made the original Passover liturgically and mystically present. It wasn't just a remembrance, but a participation in the first Passover. Even later generations understood their Passover sacrifices to be in commemoration for what the Lord did for *me* when he brought *me* out of Egypt.

In the New Testament, Jesus elevates the Passover sacrifice; no longer is it only Israel that is saved, but the entire world, and not merely from political and physical slavery, but slavery to sin. In the Gospel of John, Jesus is called "the Lamb of God," and as the Lamb of God, He elevates the Paschal sacrifice as His blood is spilled on the cross. Like the children of Israel in Egypt, Christians are covered by the blood of the Lamb, protected from eternal death. At the Last Supper, Jesus tell His apostles to "do this" in memory of Him, and like the children of Israel remembering the Passover, we continually remember that "Christ, our Paschal Lamb, has been sacrificed" as we participate in the Mass (1 Corinthians 5:7). When we celebrate this mystery, Christ and His sacrifice are present, a witness to the mercy of God that was foreshadowed in the Passover.

The Liturgy in the Early Church

In the first few centuries of the Church, Christians perpetuated this singular sacrifice as Christ commanded. When Christ instituted the Eucharist, it was not a separate event from the crucifixion- they were one and the same. This sacrifice took a form which Catholics will find very familiar. Justin Martyr, a philosopher who converted to Christianity and eventually died for the faith, wrote a work explaining and defending Christian beliefs and practices to the Roman Emperor Antoninus Pius around the year 150 A.D. Justin Martyr's explanation on the Mass itself is cited in the Catechism of the Catholic Church and explains how Christians worshiped:

On the day we call the day of the sun, all who dwell in the city or country gather in the same place. The memoirs of the apostles and writings of the prophets are read, as much as time permits. When the reader has finished, he who presides over those gathered admonishes and challenges them to imitate these beautiful things. Then we all rise together and offer prayers for ourselves . . . and for all others, wherever they may be, so that we may be found righteous by our life and actions, and faithful to the commandments, so as to obtain eternal salvation. When the prayers are concluded we exchange the kiss. Then someone brings bread and a cup of water and wine mixed together to him who presides over the brethren. He takes them and offers praise and glory to the Father of the universe, through the name of the Son and of the Holy Spirit and for a considerable time he gives thanks (in Greek: eucharistian) that we have been judged worthy of these gifts. When he has concluded the prayers and thanksgivings, all present give voice to the acclamation by saying: 'Amen.' When he who presides has given thanks and the people have responded, those whom we call deacons give to those present the "eucharisted" bread, wine and water and take them to those who are absent.

(CCC 1345)

Let's unpack that a little bit. Christians gathered together on Sunday to worship. In the first part of that worship, they read from scripture (the "memoirs of the Apostles" seems to be the gospels, while the "writings of the prophets" seems to be the Old Testament). Then the

presider speaks about what has been read, and encourages the faithful to live it out in their lives. This is essentially what we still do in the first half of the Mass! In the Liturgy of the Word, we hear from the New Testament (memoirs for the Apostles). Then we hear a homily from the priest or deacon, where they speak to the faithful about the readings or life as a Christian. After that, Justin Martyr describes what we experience in the prayers of the faithful and the kiss of peace.

From there, Justin describes the Liturgy of the Eucharist. It begins with the offertory (“someone brings bread and a cup of water and wine mixed together”), where the faithful offer the bread and wine for the sacrifice to the priest. You might notice this in your parish when someone brings the gifts to the altar. Then for a considerable time, the presider offers prayers and gives thanks. St. Justin was writing in Greek, so when he says “give thanks,” the word he uses is *eucharistian*. This might seem familiar to you, because it’s where we get the word “Eucharist.” The Eucharistic prayers come from this idea- that it is a sacrifice of thanksgiving, an idea originating in scripture. When the priest has concluded these prayers, Justin says, all the people exclaimed “Amen.” After that, the people receive communion from this “eucharisted” bread, and take some to those who couldn’t be there.

As Catholic participants at Mass, the parallels here should be obvious. St. Justin Martyr was describing the same kind of liturgy celebrated throughout Church history. And this was just a little over 100 years after Christ’s death! History certainly shows that the Catholic Church did not invent the mass, especially not centuries after Christ.

We might encounter someone who says, “Sure, the worship style is similar, but the early Church didn’t think that Jesus was really present in the bread like modern Catholics do. That was a later invention by the Catholic Church.” But they couldn’t be further from the truth! The Catholic Church teaches that Jesus Christ is fully present in the Eucharist. Have you heard the phrase “body, blood, soul, and divinity” in the Mass? That means that Jesus’s body and blood are present, that He is really present in the Eucharist. When we receive the bread and wine, we are receiving His flesh and blood, as Jesus describes in John 6: 22-59. We’re not receiving a corpse, but rather we receive His living human soul and His divine nature. (That’s one reason why receiving the Eucharist isn’t cannibalism, as some have accused.) The truth of the Eucharist as the body, blood, soul, and divinity of Christ has been a consistent teaching throughout Church history, and so we can ask with confidence, “Did the early Church believe all this?” This answer is yes!

The Doctrines of the Eucharist in the Early Church

In addition to the practice of the Mass, Justin Martyr also wrote about the Eucharist:

And this food is called among us the Eucharist, of which no one is allowed to partake but the man who believes that the things which we teach are true. . . For not as common bread and common drink do we receive these; but in like manner as Jesus Christ our Savior, having been made flesh by the Word of God, had both flesh and blood for our salvation, so likewise have we been taught that the food which is blessed by the prayer of His word . . . is the flesh and blood of that Jesus who was made flesh.

(First Apology 66)

Even before Justin Martyr, St. Ignatius, writing in 110 A.D., taught that the doctrines concerning the Eucharist were so important that it was Jesus really present in the Eucharist, then you shouldn’t receive it. He writes:

Take note of those who hold heterodox opinions on the grace of Jesus Christ which has come to us, and see how contrary their opinions are to the mind of God. [. . .] They abstain from the Eucharist and from prayer because they do not confess that the Eucharist is the flesh of our Savior Jesus Christ, flesh which suffered for our sins and which that Father, in His goodness, raised up again. They who deny the gift of God are perishing in their disputes.

(Letter to the Smyrnaeans 6:2-7:1)

Living and teaching in the second century fewer than 100 years after the Gospel of John was written, St. Irenaeus teaches the same thing about the Eucharist. Speaking of the resurrection at the end of time, he says:

[The bread] becomes the Eucharist, which is the body and blood of Christ; so also our bodies, being nourished by it, and deposited in the earth, and suffering decomposition there, shall rise at their appointed time.

(Against Heresies 5.2.3)

St. Irenaeus received his teachings from St. Polycarp, who received his teachings from St. John the Apostle himself. Similar quotes from the early church fathers abound. When you look at history, it's quite easy to see how Catholic teachings, especially the teachings on the Eucharist, find their origin in the teachings of Jesus Christ.

Since the Eucharist is the "source and summit" of the whole Catholic life, we find an essential continuity between the Catholic Church today and Christianity very early on. We know both from scripture and history that Jesus Christ started the Catholic Church with Peter and the Apostles. It is also important to recognize that the Church is not based on the Bible, as some other Christian churches aspire to be. The Church pre-dates the New Testament documents, and it is instrumental in understanding them so that we may live a life in conformity to the Word of God. The Catechism says it well:

Still, the Christian faith is not a "religion of the book." Christianity is the religion of the "Word" of God, a word which is "not a written and mute word, but the Word which is incarnate and living." If the Scriptures are not to remain a dead letter, Christ, the eternal Word of the living God, must, through the Holy Spirit, "open [our] minds to understand the Scriptures."

(CCC 108)

What a gift to have the witness of the Mass, and of the saints and teachers of the Catholic Church, as we live our faith in God's world!

PRAYERS

There is an optional prayer for when you dip your fingers into the holy water font.

Most of the time when we dip our fingers into the holy water font, either at church or at home, we simply make the sign of the cross and go about our way.

Making the sign of the cross with holy water is a prayer in itself and asks the Holy Trinity to surround us with protection and grace.

However, there is also an additional prayer that can be said (though certainly not required) that is found in the *Golden Manual*. It is a short prayer that is taken directly from **Psalm 51**, and perfectly summarizes the symbolism found in using holy water to bless ourselves.

Water is always seen in Christian theology as a means of **purification**, and so we ask God to **cleanse** us every time we use holy water. Below is the optional prayer that can lead to a more fruitful experience of dipping your fingers into the holy water font.

Sprinkle me, O Lord, with hyssop, and I shall be cleansed; wash me, and I shall be made whiter than the snow. Create in me a clean heart, O God, and renew a right spirit within me

Begin your day by engaging in a little spiritual warfare!

It is often said that how well your morning goes will determine the outlook of your day. This is especially true in the spiritual life!

If we allow ourselves to be lured by a temptation early in the morning, we will be more susceptible to spiritual attacks as the day progresses. This is why it is important to begin the day by declaring our love and loyalty to God, asking him to drive away the devil and his temptations.

Here is a short prayer from the *Golden Manual* that can be added to your morning prayers, fortifying your life with the "armor of God."

O Holy Trinity, one God, defend me this day from the deceits and temptations of the devil, keep me from all sin, and preserve me from sudden and un-provided death. Raise up, O God, my body from sleep and drowsiness, and my soul from sin, that I may praise and glorify thy holy name, to whom belongs all benediction, and honor, and wisdom, and thanksgiving, now and for ever. Amen.

PASTOR'S SCHEDULE EVENTS OF THE COMING WEEK

Saturday 15 Feb

8:30 a.m. Mass

10:00 a.m. Baptism

1:30 p.m. Confession

5:00 p.m. Vigil Mass 6th Sunday Ordinary Time Baptism

7:00 p.m. Meetings

Sunday 16 Feb 6th Sunday Ordinary Time

7:00 a.m., 8:30 a.m. Masses

11:30 a.m. Mass Baptism, Confirmation Welcome, Wedding Anniversary Blessing

1:30 p.m. Liturgy Committee meeting

8:00 p.m. Mass Brig

Monday 17 Feb Day Off

8:30 a.m. Mass

10:00 a.m. Appointment

Tuesday 18 Feb

8:30 a.m. Mass

9:00 a.m. Meeting

10:30 a.m. Mass Georgian Manor

6:00 p.m. Finance Council

Wednesday 19 Feb

6:30 a.m. Mass

7:00 – 8:30 a.m. Confessions

8:30 a.m. Mass
11:00 a.m. Liturgy & Education Staff Meeting
5:30 p.m. Mass Indian Creek

Thursday 20 Feb

8:30 a.m. Mass
9:30 a.m. Meeting
5:00 p.m. Confessions
6:30 p.m. Mass
7:00 p.m. RCIA

Friday 21 Feb

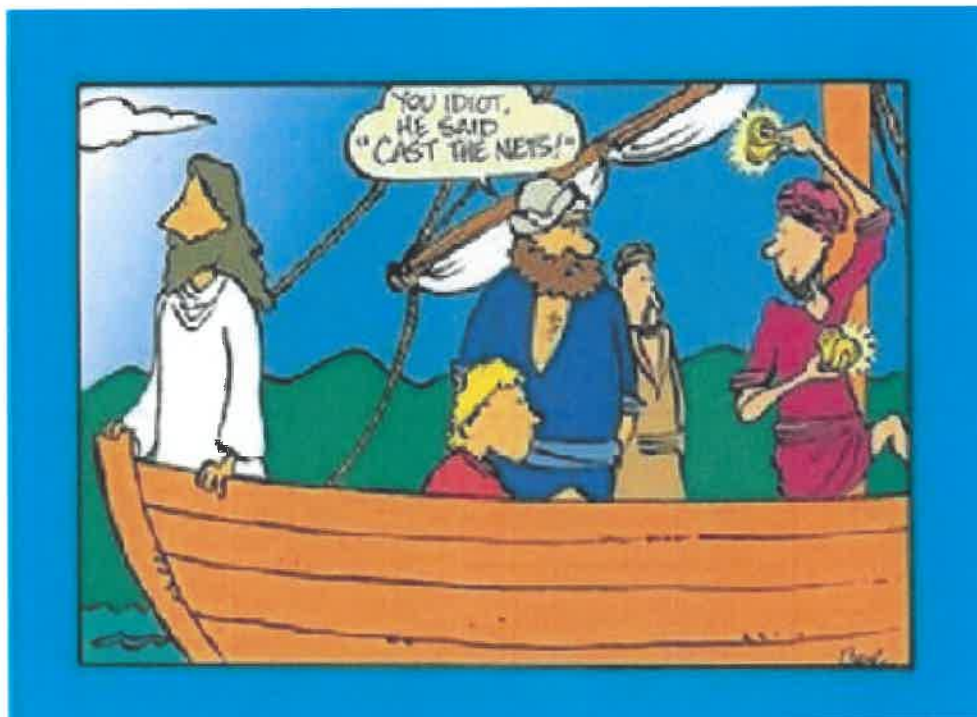
8:30 a.m. Mass
5:00 – 7:00 p.m. Adoration

Saturday 22 Feb

8:30 a.m. Mass
10:00 a.m. Pvt. Baptism
1:00 – 4:30 p.m. Confessions
5:00 p.m. Vigil Mass 7th Sunday Ordinary Time
6:30 p.m. Chilli Cook Off

Sunday 23 Feb 7th Sunday Ordinary Time

7:00 a.m. 8:30 a.m. 11:30 a.m. Masses
8:00 p.m. Mass Brig



The Mass within Scripture

*(The verses below will give a topic
, and the chapter/verse found in the book of Revelation..)*

Sunday worship 1:10.

A high priest 1:13.

An altar 8:3-4; 11:1; 14:18.

Priests (presbyteroi—Greek word for priest anew) 4:4; 11:15; 14:3; 19:4.

Vestments 1:13; 4:4; 6:11; 7:9; 15:6; 19:13-14.

Consecrated celibacy 14:4.

Lamp stands 1:12, 2:5.

Penitence ch. 2 and 3 as a whole.

Incense 5:8; 8:3-5.

The book, or scroll 5:1.

The Eucharistic Host 2:17.

Chalices 15:7; ch. 16; 21:9.

The Sign of the Cross (the tau) 7:3; 14:1; 22:4.

The Gloria 15:3-4.

The Alleluia 19:1, 3, 4, 6.

Lift up your hearts 11:12.

The "Holy, Holy, Holy" 4:8.

The Amen 19:4; 22:21.

The "Lamb of God" 5:6.

Acknowledgement of the Virgin Mary 12:1-6; 13-17.

Intercession of angels and saints 5:8; 6:0-10; 8:3-4.

Participation of St. Michael, archangel 12:7.

Antiphonal chant 4:8-11; 5:9-14; 7:10-12; 18:1-8.

Readings from Scripture ch 2-3; 5; 8:2-11.

The priesthood of the faithful 1:6; 20:6.

Catholicity, or universality 7:9.

Silent contemplation 8:1.

The marriage supper of the Lamb 19:9, 17.