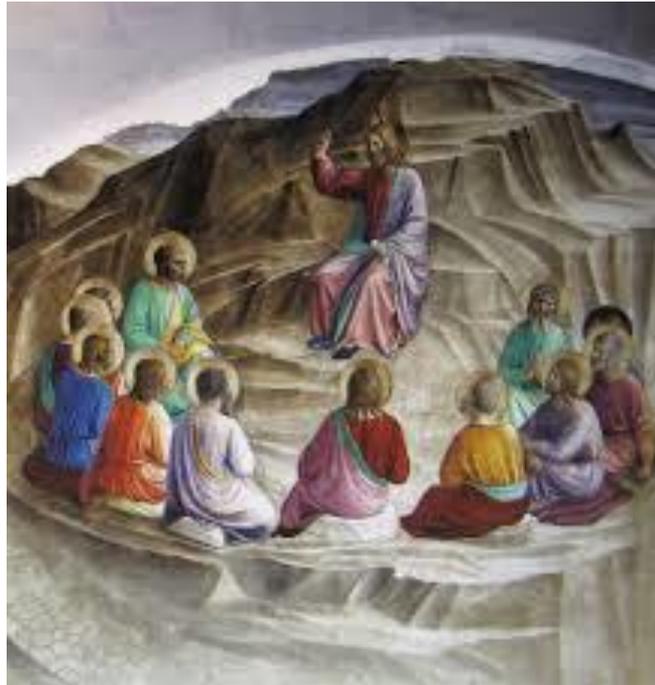


PASTOR'S MEANDERINGS
SEVENTEENTH SUNDAY ORDINARY TIME (C)

27 – 28 JULY 2019



SUNDAY REFLECTION

Eucharist recalls the ordeal of Jesus in the supreme moment of His life. By eating and drinking with Jesus, we reveal that we are family members who take His self-giving seriously. At Eucharist we implicitly assume the obligation of recalling His sacrifice in our daily prayer. We are challenged to view Eucharist as our commitment to be in touch with the Father by following the example of Jesus at prayer, especially the night before He died.

STEWARDSHIP: Jesus is describing God's immeasurable generosity when He says in today's Gospel, "Whoever asks, receives; whoever seeks, finds; whoever knocks, is admitted." But it should also be the description of us as Christian stewards – those seeking to follow Christ by using our gifts in service to others.

Ralph W. Sockman

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

READINGS FOR THE EIGHTEENTH SUNDAY

4 AUG '19

Eccl. 1:2; 2:21-23: The value of work, even carried out wisely and done well, is called into question. Are all human efforts, indeed everything, in vain?

Col. 3:1-5, 9-11: The true purpose of existence is participation in the glorious life of Christ in heaven. Progress towards this reality requires putting 'on a new self' and putting away all earthly forms of distinction between people.

Lk. 12:13-21: In the parable of the wealthy man who hoards things and hopes for happiness from them, Jesus warns about the temptation of wealth to take people away from the true treasure of holiness.

Woodrow Wilson

"Unless our civilization is redeemed spiritually, it cannot endure materially."

GESTURES & POSTURES Continued

Kneeling for the Eucharistic Prayer

After the Gospel and the homily (if there is one that day), after the Preparation of the Gifts, the Great Prayer, called "the Canon" or "the Eucharistic Prayer", begins. During this time we kneel. Since this gesture has a somewhat complicated history, it's worth spending some time on it.

The meaning of this gesture of kneeling is manifold:

- humble submission before the majesty of God
- penance and a spirit of repentance
- adoration and reverence in prayer

The use of this posture in the Mass developed gradually.

a. In a seventh century document, the *Ordo Romanus I*, it says that during the Canon only the Pope stood upright, while all the others in the sanctuary remained bowed for the entire Eucharistic Prayer. The sign for standing upright again was the phrase *nobis quoque peccatoribus* near the end of the Canon: that was the sign also for the deacon and subdeacon to go about their preparations for communion. In fact, in the old Mass, that phrase was said out loud while the rest of the Canon was said quietly, as a remnant of the ancient practice of bowing during the Canon.

b. From the ninth century onward, there is historical evidence for the posture of kneeling during the Canon. The Synod of Tours (813) described this as the characteristic posture of the faithful, although for Sundays and feasts, it was the custom to stand.

c. In the thirteenth century, because of developments in Eucharistic theology and various movements of Eucharistic devotion, the practice of kneeling at the consecration became the norm.

d. In 1502, the *Ordo Missae* of John Burckhard prescribes kneeling for the prayers at the foot of the altar, and for the consecration. Our present rubrics—by way of the post-Tridentine liturgical books—have their origin in this *Ordo Missae* of Burckhard.

The history of this gesture—whether in liturgical prayer or in private prayer—is rather complex. For our purposes today it is enough to stress the importance of doing it well. Guardini says: "Let not the bending of our knees be a hurried gesture, an empty form. Put meaning into it; to kneel, in the soul's intention, is to bow down before God in deepest reverence."

The bodily posture of kneeling is above all a sign of reverence for Christ present in the Eucharist.

Reading over this I was reminded of a regular occurrence in high school. (I am well aware that some may view that statement and the subsequent remarks as being from the distant past.

Although i/m looking back across a number of decades the actions may be antique but not necessarily antiquated.)

The chapel of Bishop Canevin High School was situated in a central courtyard and the school entrance. When Mass was celebrated for the entire school in the gym, the Eucharist was carried from that chapel through the connecting hall ways on to the stage of the auditorium / gym. As the priest dressed in his habit, cope and carrying the Blessed Sacrament. He was always accompanied by a server with a candle. As individuals became aware of this procession; students, faculty, staff automatically, without hesitation knelt down in honor of Christ present in the Eucharist. That gesture made a profound impression on anyone observing. (I watched the same pattern of behavior on a daily basis when Dad, following an auto accident was in a Catholic hospital for several months.)

I raise the point because following Vatican II there was a mad rush to eliminate the rituals and ceremonies with the argument that they stifled the developing maturity of the Catholic laity. Unfortunately the meaning behind the actions was also lost.

In these days, when the Catholic understanding of the Eucharist is often very weak – when there are some people who don't even know what it is that they receive, or perhaps even really care – it is imperative that we show by our gestures the faith we believe. Actions speak louder than words! So let us kneel. *Flectamus genua*. Carefully, deliberately, reverently. That will reinforce our own belief in the Real Presence of Christ, it will teach our children by example, it will inspire our fellow Catholics, and it will scandalize a world that does not believe.

ALTAR Continued

Altar Cloths

The use of altar-cloths goes back to the early centuries of the Church. St. Optatus says that in the fourth century every Christian knew that during the celebration of the Mysteries the altar is covered with a cloth (bk. VI). Later it became a law, which, according to Gavantus, was promulgated by Boniface III in the seventh century. The custom of using three altar-cloths began probably in the ninth century.

The reason of this prescription of the Church is that if the Precious Blood should by accident be spilt it might be absorbed by the altar cloths before it reached the altar stone. All authors hold it to be a grievous offense to celebrate without an altar cloth, except in case of grave necessity, e.g. of affording to the faithful the opportunity of assisting at Sunday Mass, or of giving Viaticum to a dying person.

To be continued: Liturgy of the Cloth: How the Early Church Incorporated the Shroud and Sudarium in the Mass

SAINT OF THE WEEK PLEGMUND (d. 914) 2 AUG

Benedictine archbishop of Canterbury (890-914) and the tutor of King Alfred the Great. Plegmund was born in Mercia, England, and was a hermit near Chester. He was appointed archbishop by Pope Stephen V (VI) (r. 885-891) at the request of Alfred, proving a capable prelate, scholar, and dedicated reformer. He went to Rome in 908 to see Pope Sergius III (r. 904-911) and later died at Canterbury.

