

PASTOR'S MEANDERINGS
THIRTEENTH SUNDAY ORDINARY TIME (C)

29 – 30 JUNE 2019



SUNDAY REFLECTION

In celebrating Eucharist, we recall Jesus' pledged word to the Father that He would do His will. The self-giving of Jesus is the perfect expression of fidelity to one's word. At the same time Eucharist offers us the strength to renew our commitment to our God and our community. To share the bread and the cup is to announce that we are in need of nourishment for the lifelong task of being faithful to our word. The example of Jesus as well as sharing the Eucharistic food and drink is a powerful reminder that we do not walk alone in our journey through life.

Unlike the apprentice prophet Elisha we do not serve our Lord; rather He serves us. In the Eucharist He invites us to participate in His life, death and resurrection, which are the means of the establishment of God's kingdom in the world. Our learning from Jesus is not from without but from within, Jesus is within us and we are in Him. Food and drink are signs of life. Eating and drinking are signs of wanting to live. By receiving Jesus as food and drink we signify that we want to live from Him and by Him. Elisha ended his previous way of life with a celebratory meal of his oxen cooked on the wood of his yoke. We repeatedly renew our commitment to Jesus in a meal with Him, a meal which represents His living, dying and being raised for the sake of God's kingdom. The Mass is prophetic, because in it we proclaim the kingdom in word and act. It is a sign of what we are called to do in our ordinary lives.

STEWARDSHIP: In today's second reading, St. Paul provides a wonderful one-sentence summary of Christian stewardship: Out of love, place yourselves at one another's service.

David Watson

“If we were willing to learn the meaning of real discipleship and actually to become disciples, the Church in the West would be transformed and the resultant impact on society would be staggering.”

READINGS FOR THE FOURTEENTH SUNDAY

7 JUL '19

Is. 66:10-14: Isaiah uses the image of the love of a mother for her child to express the love God has for Israel with all her troubles.

Gal. 6:14-18: We can be attached to symbols, like soldiers to a uniform, but the proof of our Christianity is the life we live not any badge or other outward symbol of title.

Lk. 10:1-12, 17-20: This a very lively passage where the ordinary disciples are invited by Jesus to go out and preach the Good News and to cure the sick. They come back rejoicing.

Vatican Council II *'The Church Today'*

It is our clear duty, then to strain every muscle as we work for the time when all war can be completely outlawed by international consent. This goal undoubtedly requires the establishment of some universal public authority acknowledged as such by all, and endowed with effective power to safeguard, on the behalf of all, security, regard for justice, and respect for rights.

Peace must be born of mutual trust between nations rather than imposed on them through fear of one another's weapons. Hence everyone must labor to put an end at last to the arms race, and to make a true beginning of disarmament, not indeed a unilateral disarmament, but one proceeding at an equal pace according to agreement and backed up by authentic and workable safeguards.

GESTURES AND POSTURES

At the end of July the pews will be installed which will bring to the fore the question about kneeling; the whys, wherefores, when and how. In the following weeks it may be beneficial to discuss the background, meaning and the methodology associated with these. Obviously we will begin with this concept of kneeling.

Bodily gestures are the principal means by which one expresses the highest forms of one's spiritual, intellectual, and artistic experiences, and the principal ways in which humans communicate with each other. Rite and ceremony have been used by all religions both to intensify and to communicate the interior dispositions of the soul. Gestures, no less than words, are a part of human language, the one appealing to sight, the other to hearing—the two senses closest to the intellect and therefore closest to the spiritual life. Each is a language unto itself, yet normally they depend upon each other for the full expression of one's inner self—words calling upon gestures to give them greater force, intensity, and eloquence, and gestures calling upon words to make their meaning more articulate. Any act or movement of the human body becomes a gesture when it gives expression to meaning within an interpersonal relationship. Liturgical gestures in their turn express specific meanings within the relationship between God and human persons in community celebrations.

Christian Usage Christian prayer demands a profound engagement of the human body because the mystery of the Incarnation—the Word became flesh and gave humanity a share in the social life of the Trinity, expressed in the communal life of the Mystical Body. For Christians, the mystery of the Incarnation is the reason for sacramentalizing the human body. Human gestures play an extensive role throughout the entire liturgy. The use of bodily gesture in the prayer life of the Church is simply an imitation of Christ Himself who in prayer lifted His eyes to heaven, prostrated Himself, etc.; who used gestures as a means to perform His miracles when a simple word would have sufficed; who taught by means of such gestures as the washing of the feet of His disciples; and who finally offered His entire body in the perfect act of worship on the cross.

In particular, there are three ways in which the human body, through the use of gestures, enters into the liturgical action of the Church: by giving expression to the sentiments and dispositions of the soul, as in extending the hands, bowing, or kneeling; by performing an action upon an external object, as in anointings and blessings; and by being acted upon in such a way that it becomes sanctified, as in baptismal immersion or the laying on of hands.

However, if gestures are to be meaningful and our use of them intelligent, their real significance must be properly understood. For this two extremes must be avoided. One is the excessively allegorical interpretation found in a number of medieval authors, such as Amalarius of Metz (d. 850) and Bernold of Constance (d.1100), which was popular up to the 17th century. Like the allegorical exegesis of the Bible characteristic of some of the early Church Fathers, this method projects into liturgical gesture arbitrary, subjective, mystical, and piously moralistic significance that ignores its actual historical origin or its objective basic symbolism. Thus, to cite only one example, a great variety of meanings were attributed to the gesture of breaking the host into three parts: the Blessed Trinity, the three parts of the Church, the wounds of Christ in the three parts of His body, the three travelers on the road to Emmaus, etc. The other extreme is exemplified by Dom Claude de Vert [*Explication simple, littérale et historique des cérémonies de l'Église*, 4 v. (Paris 1706–13)], who tried to eliminate all symbolism from liturgical ceremonies by explaining their origin in terms of practical necessity or convenience. Later, Pierre Le Brun succeeded in avoiding these two extreme positions by taking into account both symbolic and functional aspects [*Explication littérale, historique et dogmatique des prières et des cérémonies de la Messe*, 4 v. (Paris 1716–25)].

Kinds In the light of objective and realistic analysis, liturgical actions can be grouped into three main categories. First of all, there are actions that serve functional purposes of utility, convenience, or fittingness, such as the ablutions of the chalice and the fingers of the priest after Communion. Then there are interpretative actions that express the natural human inclination to communicate by combining words and gestures, such as kneeling as a sign of penitence. Third, there are purely symbolic actions, such as the presentation of the white robe and the lighted candle to the newly baptized. It is also possible to divide all liturgical actions into postures and gestures. To be continued

ALTAR Continued

RELICS: Were you aware that there are the relics of saints in, or more accurately, under the altar here at St. Stephen, Martyr? Yes there is, or more precisely there are a number of First Class relics in a locked wooden box which is secured on a shelf under the surface (mensa) of the

altar on the presider's side. Why? may be the question that is going through some of your minds while the other question could be who's relics are there.

Contained within every consecrated Catholic altar are relics of saints, an ancient tradition that finds its roots in the very earliest days of the Church.

When Catholicism was still illegal under the Roman Empire, early members of the Faithful would meet in underground catacombs to escape harsh persecution. They would celebrate Mass on the stone slabs covering the tombs of martyrs in order to show proper reverence for the ultimate sacrifice they made for Christ.

When Emperor Constantine legalized Christianity, Mass no longer needed to be held underground out of necessity. Moving above ground, they didn't leave behind the tradition of venerating the relics of saints. Churches were generally built over the remains of martyrs, but when not possible a first-class relic was placed within the altar and covered by a stone slab.

First, consider why relics are put under the altar:

Dedication of a Church or Altar (DCA) IV, 5 All the dignity of the altar rests on its being the Lord's table. Thus the martyr's body does not bring honor to the altar; rather the altar does honor to the martyr's tomb. For it is altogether proper to erect altars over the burial place of martyrs and other saints or to deposit their relics beneath altars as a mark of respect and as a symbol of the truth that the sacrifice of the members has its source in the sacrifice of the Head. Thus 'the triumphant victims come to their rest in the place where Christ is victim: He, however, who suffered for all is on the altar; they who have been redeemed by His sufferings are beneath the altar.' This arrangement would seem to recall in a certain manner the spiritual vision of the Apostle John in the Book of Revelation: 'I saw underneath the altar the souls of all the people who have been killed on account of the word of God, for witnessing to it.' His meaning is that although all the saints are rightly called Christ's witnesses, the witness of blood has a special significance that only the relics of the martyrs beneath the altar express in its entirety.

[As Jesus' sacrifice is made present on top of the altar, He is made present above those who have died for Him. He is the head and they are the body. This also foreshadows the Resurrection of the Body, when at the end of time, God will bring our mortal bodies back from decomposition and reunite our souls to them in a glorified manner, and those who are going to Heaven will rise together as one Body with Jesus as our head.]

Revelation 6:9: "I saw underneath the altar the souls of all people who had been killed on account of the word of God, for witnessing to it."

[Revelation is St. John's record of the vision of Heaven that he was given. Our tradition of building altars above relics is tied up with this vision.]

Do all altars have to have relics?

Canon Law 1237 .2: The ancient tradition of placing relics of martyrs or other saints under a fixed altar is to be preserved, according to the norms given in the liturgical books.

[While this says that the tradition is to be preserved, it doesn't give any specifics about the tradition, nor what the liturgical books say.]

General Instruction of the Roman Missal (GIRM) 302: The practice of placing relics of Saints, even those not Martyrs, under the altar to be dedicated is fittingly retained. Care should be taken however, to ensure the authenticity of such relics.

[This is basically what Canon Law states, but it also give the stipulation that the relic needs to be authentic. We don't want just a random person's bone(s) below our altars. The altar honors the saint's bones.]

DCA II, 5. The tradition in the Roman liturgy of placing relics of martyrs or other saints beneath the altar should be preserved, if possible. But the following should be noted:

- a) Such relics should be of a size sufficient for them to be recognized as parts of human bodies. Hence excessively small relics of one or more saints must not be placed beneath the altar.
- b) The greatest care must be taken to determine whether the relics in question are authentic. It is better for an altar to be dedicated without relics than to have relics of doubtful authenticity placed beneath it.
- c) A reliquary must not be placed upon the altar or set into the table of the altar; it must be placed beneath the table of the altar, as the design of the altar permits.

[So, the tradition "should be preserved, if possible." That answers the original question: not every altar must have a relic. It also specifies more about the relic requirements. They should be sizable, not just those little bone ships you normally see. Note: there is a distinction between "should" and "musts" in Church documents, but "should" are still to be followed, if possible. The relic must not be on top, but must be below the table of the altar. This fits more with Re. 6:9 "the souls are underneath the altar.]

DCA II, 14. When relics of a martyr are not available, relics of another saint may be deposited in the altar.

{This also fits with Rev. 6:9. The souls who were underneath the altar "had been killed on account of the word of God, for witnessing to it." They were martyrs. "Martyr" means witness. It is then fitting that we prefer the relics of martyrs to be underneath our altars.]

DCA VI, 3. It is not permissible to place the relics of saints in the base of a movable altar.

[This also sheds light on the initial question. Moveable altars cannot have relics, so it is necessary that not all altars will have relics, though it is preferred that fixed altars do, indeed have relics.]

Canon 1235: An altar ... is called fixed if it is so constructed that it adheres to the floor and thus cannot be moved; it is called moveable if it can be removed.

[This begs the question as to how much effort is necessary to remove an altar for it to be considered fixed and not moveable. If a wood altar is screwed into the floor, I would imagine that it would be considered fixed, but it takes little effort to move it. Whereas a heavy stone altar might not be screwed to the floor, but it would take a great effort to move it. Would the wood be considered fixed while the stone be considered moveable, even though the stone altar is really much more fixed than the wooden one? I don't know. Perhaps they are both fixed because more than a little effort is required to move either of them.]

SAINT OF THE WEEK: JUNIPERO SERRA 1713-1784 1 JULY

No person has had more influence on the settlement of California than Junipero Serra. He was born Miguel Jose Serra to parents of humble means, living in Petra on the Mediterranean island of Majorca. His early education took place on the island at the Franciscan convent of San Bernardino. The church there had several small chapels on either side of the main altar dedicated to saints. Young Miguel developed a strong love for these saints while attending Mass, and their names – including San Diego, San Juan Capistrano, Nuestra Senora de Los Angeles, San Francisco – later became the names of the cities and missions which he established along the Camino Real in California.

Miguel was ordained in 1737, and took the name Junipero at the time. In the same year, he was named a professor of philosophy at the university in Palma, Spain. He continued with his studies and in 1742, earned a doctorate in theology. A year later, he was elected to the Dun Scotus chair of theology at the university. He also became renowned as a preacher on the island and was chosen to preach on the highest holy days.

Since he was a boy, Junipero Serra had dreamed of becoming a missionary in the New World. When the opportunity came, he joined about thirty other Franciscan missionaries who sailed to Mexico, arriving on 2 Dec. 1749. For most of the next twenty years, Junipero served as a missionary in the harsh environment of the Sierra Madres of northeastern Mexico and as a professor at the College of San Fernando in Mexico City.

Prior to 1768, the Jesuits had established many missions in Mexico and in Baja California. But a dispute with King Carlos III of Spain in that year led to the order being forcibly ejected from their missions, and the priests sent back to Spain. To ensure that Spain would maintain a strong position in the New World, the king ordered the Franciscans to take over the Jesuit missions in Baja, California and to establish new missions north along the coast in the Spanish-claimed territory, which extended north to present day British Columbia. Juniper Serra was selected to lead the Franciscan missionaries in this new assignment.

Serra believed that the colonization of California was secondary to the conversion of the Indians, and his lifework reflected this. His biographers wrote of his love for his “dear children,” the more than 6,700 Indians whom he baptized and the more than 5,000 whom he confirmed. During the period in which Padre Serra worked among the Indians, he raised their health and living standards and introduced training in agriculture, letters, crafts, and music.

A man of vision, Junipero Serra’s concept was to build a “ladder” of missions one day’s journey apart between San Diego and San Francisco. Between 1769 and 1782, Padre Serra actually established nine missions along this route, most of which are still active today.

The cause for Serra’s beatification began in the Diocese of Monterey-Fresno in 1934, and the diocesan process was finished in 1949. On September 25, 1988 he was beatified by Pope John Paul II. Pope Francis canonized Junipero Serra on September 23, 2015 during a Mass in Washington, DC.