



SUNDAY REFLECTION

The human mind is an extraordinary miracle. In the stone age humans were weaker and slower than so many animals that were powerful and fast. But human intelligence made it possible to survive. Down through the millennia, the creativity of the human mind and the ability to discover the secrets of creation have unfolded in amazing ways. The human mind has discovered stars, galaxies and black holes that are millions of light years away, while at the same time reaching down into sub-atomic level of everything around us. Great orchestral symphonies, the ceiling of the Sistine Chapel, the plays of Shakespeare, and the magic of the internet have all come from the human mind!

Even more wonderful is that the human mind is an antenna for God. The human mind reaches out towards God, and God, with infinite kindness, delights in being found. To neglect this while doing everything else would be like having a Formula-1 sports car and using it only to drive to the local fast-food emporium to pick up the latest wonder in gastronomic empty calories! For centuries the saints have been telling us, from their own experience, that the journey of the mind towards God brings delights that are so wonderful they cannot be put into words. The human mind is very powerful, but like nuclear power, has to be carefully managed; otherwise the effects can be devastating. Think of the immense tragedy and suffering brought about in the last hundred years by twentieth-century ideologies.

The first appearance of human evil in the pages of the Bible occurred on the level of human thought, when Adam and Eve became convinced that God was not to be trusted, was ultimately mean, depriving them of something which they could reach out and grasp on their own. When

our mental antenna is not turned towards God, our thought lead eventually to dead ends, conflict and human suffering.

God's ways, God's thoughts, God's plans, are infinitely better than our own. The owner of the vineyard was both just and kind: giving a just wage to those who worked a full day, while being lavishly kind and generous to those who were unemployed. Those who complained were suffering from envy, a disease of the mind: what they had was fair but they were still unhappy because they started to look with envy at how others were treated. In the parable of the prodigal son the elder brother couldn't stand the fact that his father was so generous to his wayward son. When he complained he received from this father a gentle response, perfumed with the same loving generosity: 'My son, you are with me always, and all I have is yours.'

If I don't continually turn my mind to God I will fall into the same trap. I won't see the world around me, or the people around me as they really are. When Samuel went to choose a future king from among the sons of Jesse, he was fooled by the impressive appearance of strong, hefty men. But God looks at the heart, and because Samuel was also turned in to God, he finally found the real hero, young David, the shepherd boy out in the fields.

St. Paul himself confessed that early on he saw Jesus himself in an all-too limited human way that was blind to the full reality. Only later did he come to recognize Jesus in the Spirit. When Peter came to recognize that Jesus was indeed the Messiah, Jesus exclaimed that it was not flesh and blood that had revealed this to him, but 'my Father in heaven.' (Mt. 16:17) but how quickly our thoughts get derailed! Only a few lines later Jesus will say: 'Get behind me Satan! You are a stumbling block to me; for you are setting your mind not on divine things but on human things.'

Only a mind that is turned towards God will see things as they really are! Without a continual turning of our attention God-winds, we will see only the speck in our neighbor's eye and not notice the plank in our own. The psalmist says, 'My eyes are always on the Lord, for he rescues my feet from the snare.' (Ps. 24 925):15).

In courtrooms around the world, the jury, the judge and the public look at the one pronounced guilty with disdain, contempt, maybe even disgust. But the defendant's mother, though she knows her child is guilty, sees someone whom she loves. She sees the history of failed attempts, of sufferings, of waywardness, and still loves. How much more does God see the beauty deeply hidden even in the most awful circumstances! God's thoughts are not ours. Constant contact with Scripture helps us to 'put on the mind of Christ'. The seemingly displaced generosity he dreamed up in the parable of the vineyard workers played itself out later on for real. The so-called 'good thief' (Luke called him an 'evildoer') turned to Jesus, not at the eleventh hour of his life but at a minute to midnight. What Jesus gave him was not a fair wage, not even just a generous gift, but paradise itself. The same gift is on offer in the Eucharist: his body 'given up for you', and everlasting covenant of forgiveness in his blood. In order to live this gift fully, a continual re-turning of our instincts towards God is necessary. In the words of the First Reading, we must seek the Lord, turn to the Lord, call on the Lord. With the psalmist we can learn to bless the Lord, not just every now and then but 'day after day'. We can praise the name of the Lord, not just sometimes but 'for ever'. We call on the name of the Lord, and bless the name of the Lord, the name above all other names, the name of Jesus. 'the remembrance of the Name of God utterly destroys all that is evil.' (Barsanuphius)

“Through the remembrance of Jesus Christ, gather together your disintegrated mind that is scattered abroad.’ (Philotheos of Sinai)



STEWARDSHIP: In today’s Gospel, the vineyard owner says, “I am free to do as I please with my money, am I not?” We are likewise free. Is a generous return to the Lord in thanksgiving for His many blessings among the choices we have made?

Good stewards follow the advice of St. Paul and conduct themselves – by wise use of their time and talents – in a way worthy of the Gospel of Christ.

EUCCHARISTIC CONCOMITANCE

You probably are not familiar with this term. We addressed its substance back at the beginning of the coronavirus infections; however, here we are after six months and perhaps a little more detail would be beneficial at least to a degree enlightening.

During this time we have seemingly entered into a whole new world, one that was hardly anticipated back in February and April: a world of face masks, social distancing, hand sanitizers, surface disinfectants and foggers, churches closed, live streamed Masses (celebrating Mass to an empty space - really weird) reduced attendance and registering for the Mass that 100 or so people can attend on Sunday. Gone are the altar servers, extraordinary ministers of the Eucharist. Also among the disappeared are the choir, hymnals in the pews, holy water in the fonts, the physical exchange of peace, holding of hands at the Lord’s Prayer (whether approved or not).

When the distribution of the Blood of Christ was discontinued for the congregation there was little if any argument from the congregation; perhaps we or the diocese presented the rationale clearly. However, what was / is interesting is that so few parishioners know or are aware of the doctrine of Eucharistic concomitance. As we move through the seventh month and into the eighth of living with the altered state of a new, but hopefully non-permanent “normal now would be the time to explore this little known doctrine.

What is meant by the doctrine of concomitance? Namely this: that when we receive Holy Communion under the form of the consecrated Host, we receive the Body and Blood, Soul and Divinity of Our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ. And that when we receive Holy Communion under the form of the Precious Blood in the chalice, we receive the Body and Blood, Soul and Divinity of Our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ. Thus, if one receives Holy Communion under one species (and, for the most part in our Catholic history in the West, we offered the Eucharist only under the form of the Host), nothing is lacking in that reception.

The *Doctor Communis*, Saint Thomas Aquinas, teaches (and this is a tenet of our faith): “Nothing is lost by the body being received by the people without the blood: because the priest both offers and receives the blood in the name of all, and the whole Christ is present under either species” (*Summa Theologiae*, III, q. 80, a. 12, ad 3).

The *Catechism of the Catholic Church* (1390) states: “Since Christ is sacramentally present under each of the species, communion under the species of bread alone makes it possible to receive all the fruit of Eucharistic grace. For pastoral reasons this manner of receiving communion has been legitimately established as the most common form in the Latin rite. But “the sign of communion is more complete when given under both kinds, since in that form the sign of the Eucharistic meal appears more clearly.” This is the usual form of receiving communion in the Eastern rites.

The U.S. Bishops’ Conference’s document, “Norms for the Distribution and Reception of Holy Communion Under Both Kinds in the Dioceses of the United States of America,” reminds us:

It should never be construed, therefore, that Communion under the form of bread alone or Communion under the form of wine alone is somehow an incomplete act or that Christ is not fully present to the communicant. The Church’s unchanging teaching from the time of the Fathers through the ages—notably in the ecumenical councils of Lateran IV, Constance, Florence, Trent, and Vatican II — has witnessed to a constant unity of faith in the presence of Christ in both elements.

Even in the earliest days of the Church’s life, when Communion under both species was the norm, there were always instances when the Eucharist was received under only the form of bread or wine. ... Thus, the Church has always taught the doctrine of concomitance, by which we know that under each species alone, the whole Christ is sacramentally present and we receive all the fruit of Eucharistic grace.

While we continue to pray for the development of a vaccine and an end to this global pandemic as well as for the resumption of daily life within the Church and our parishes as well as in society along with the resumption of our normal daily parochial activities and reverent liturgies fully open to all; it would be good to hold in mind that even without the reception of Holy Communion by the faithful from a chalice, no one is missing out on any part of the Eucharist. Thanks to the doctrine of Eucharistic concomitance.

READINGS TWENTY-SIXTH SUNDAY

27 SEP ‘20

Ezek. 18:25-28: The Israelites’ complaint against God’s declaration of forgiveness for those who repent is rebuffed by the prophet, who sees the insincerity of their attitude.

Phil. 2:1-11: This hymn from the worship life of the early community shows how deep the early understanding of the incarnate Christ was.

Mt. 21:25-28: A parable from the final period of Jesus’ ministry invites his opponents to reflect deeply on their intransigence in face of a call to conversion.

DEVOTIONS Cont.

We speak often of the changes in Roman Catholic worship since Vatican II: the exclusive use of the vernacular; the priest celebrating Mass facing the congregation; the ill-placed Sign of Peace;

the replacement of Gregorian chant with "Kumbaya," and more. What this Catholic litany (pun intended) often omits, however, is the virtual disappearance of a major component of Catholic public prayer, commonly called "devotions." Today, when reportedly only about one of three Catholics in the United States attends obligatory Sunday Mass, it seems almost beyond belief that within recent memory great numbers would also gather in church in the evening on Wednesdays and Fridays or other weekdays, and often on Sunday afternoons, for regular and seasonal devotions. Has something better replaced devotions? Or have we properly outgrown them? This essay will consider the surprising answers to these questions.

Not long ago, when they were common, these weekday congregational prayers were most thickly clustered in the Marian months of May and October and the liturgical season of Lent. The format for May and October was standard and familiar: an opening Marian hymn; recitation of the rosary; the Loreto Litany; a brief period of silent prayer or another hymn in preparation for Benediction of the Blessed Sacrament; adoration of the Host in the monstrance; a closing hymn.

The Friday Lenten devotions were the Stations of the Cross, again followed by Benediction. Various ethnic groups had their distinctive practices as well. Devotions on Wednesday in Lent in my childhood took a form known to few Catholics in the United States but intimately familiar to our (first) Polish Pope, John Paul II. Known as *Cozlae Zale*, literally "bitter sorrow" (the first two words of the opening hymn) and translated as "Lamentations," it consisted of a series of truly Jeremiah-like Slavic songs (St. Paul's "groanings" might be a more apt description) concerning Christ's Passion, during which the congregation would alternately kneel, stand, and sit with each sequential hymn. This devotion, too, concluded with Benediction of the Blessed Sacrament.

In addition to these May, October, and Lenten devotions, there were those held less regularly. At varying times of the year, parishes would hold "Forty Hours" devotions, focusing on Eucharistic adoration, with the climax a solemn procession and the sonorous chanting of the Litany of the Saints by dozens of priests convened from the surrounding area. There were also the occasional special novenas (a nine-day cycle of Masses and prayers), often centered on a parish's patron saint and also involving the now all-but-abandoned litanies and processions, as well as Eucharistic adoration. In June, the Feast of the Sacred Heart was similarly commemorated.

All these devotions, albeit as much popular as liturgical in nature, were led by a priest, either the pastor, assistant pastor, or a visitor. He was accompanied by acolytes and by thurifers with thuribles (that means incense-bearers bearing incense, for younger readers). An organist and at least part of the Sunday choir provided music and led the singing. Devotions, while never obligatory like Sunday Mass, were taken seriously as forms of public prayer. And they were a serious source of, a reinforcement of, and education in Catholic spirituality. Why have they now been reduced to a remnant in those places where they exist at all?

One explanation may be the misunderstanding and mis-implementation of "ecumenism" that has so vitiated Christian life as a whole in the years since the Second Vatican Council. To promote Church unity it was thought that emphasis should be placed on what Catholics and our separated brethren have in common. That is laudable. Yet — unexpectedly — what was not held in common was needlessly de-emphasized and, indeed, actively suppressed. Every facet of

Catholic public prayer was suddenly at the mercy of an argument about whether it was "essential" to the faith. There are dangers in this approach that should have been obvious. Centuries ago some Christians taking a similar approach reduced the seven sacraments to two. The effect of the more recent reductionism on Catholic life over the past three decades has been less radical, but the Catholic devotions are among its victims, much to the Church's detriment.

There appears at first glance to be a certain logic to de-emphasizing devotions for the sake of Christian unity. Protestants have no public rosary recitations, or litanies, either chanted or spoken, and there is certainly nothing akin to Benediction of the Blessed Sacrament, with its Thomistic hymns and its concluding Divine Praises. If the de-emphasis or abandonment of Catholic devotions would remove some barrier to Christian unity, then such abandonment might arguably be positive.

The flaw in this thinking, however, is that it ignores the easy-to-forget truth that we relate to others best when we are most ourselves, and that to be ourselves is to be wholly ourselves in all our richness, not in an artificial, bare-bones condition. Everyday material life teaches us this lesson: Beyond the basics of food, clothing, and shelter, beyond medical care and education and transportation, there are the "inessential" things both great and small — the special things, the homey things, the beloved things — that make us what we are and that we would not want to give up. We live full lives, not diagrams of lives. This obvious lesson from the physical applies as well to the spiritual.

After three decades, we can fairly ask: Has the abandonment of devotions advanced the cause of Christian unity? No. Catholics and the "main-line" Protestants with whom greater unity was sought are separated today by issues far more serious than forms of popular religious expression. Dropping rosaries and litanies and processions has certainly not arrested the development of more and more grave differences between Protestants and Catholics in both dogmatic and moral theology, ranging from the ordination of priestesses to the endorsement of abortion. Instead, what has happened is that the power and beauty and richness of centuries of Catholic devotions have been denied to an entire generation — now adults — born after the Council, and the spirituality of those of us old enough to have experienced devotions as part of our Catholic heritage has been parched.

I would go further, and argue that suppression of devotions has not only failed to advance ecumenism but has actually retarded it. Popular devotional practices were in the past and could still be consistent with the reforms to Catholic liturgy that were intended to advance the ecumenical spirit. Take, for instance, the question of liturgy in the vernacular. Devotions (except for Latin hymns and the sung Litany of the Saints) have always been held in the vernacular, just like public prayer in the Protestant traditions. Take, for instance, the emphasis on "participatory" liturgy. Devotions have always been participatory, with the congregation actively engaged. Devotions (with the exception of Benediction) have always been more "popular" than "official," again consistent with much of Protestant practice. To be continued.

**THE CHURCH BUILDING
SANCTUARY Continued**

Before we move on to discuss the various items found in the sanctuary of the Catholic church I would suggest that we stop and reflect on the space in general and an item that at one time sharply defined this space. Growing up in the pre-Vatican II Church the priests and nuns never missed the opportunity to emphasize that the sanctuary, the space surrounding the altar was in some respects a natural development of the Holy of Holies found in the Jewish Temple. This was a space that was seen as uniquely holy due to the activities, the celebration of the sacrifice of the Mass that took place there. and because of this it was treated differently, more reverently than the other areas of the church building. One item definitively marked this area off was the altar rail which was found in all Catholic churches at that time. In the Eastern Orthodox churches the Iconostasis may be seen as its equivalent.

Yes, it served as a dividing line, marking one area from another and came to be seen by many people as a barrier to full participation in the Mass, as a “wall” or fence dividing the congregation from the celebrant. Therefore through the ‘60s and 70’s they were torn out of the churches with only remnants remaining. Perhaps we were too hasty and due reflection should at least be given to what its actual function was.

There have been many theological explanations of the altar rail’s purpose. The main one is that it is a remnant of when a screen divided the sanctuary and the priest’s offering of Holy Mass from the rest of the people who sat in the main body of the church. He offers the Mass on the behalf of the people, acting as an intermediary between heaven and earth. When we received Communion at the altar rail on the edge of the sanctuary, the priest brought Heaven to us on Earth, and it was a beautiful and humbling experience to kneel, wait, and receive Our Lord.

One explanation. But there are others.

The Baltimore Catechism stated that: “At Holy Communion, when we go up to the Banquet Table (the altar rail), Our Lord comes to us.” Today with our thought of the altar rail being a divide and the altar itself as the Banquet Table where the priest makes present Christ’s the idea that this rail could be seen as an extension of the altar – the people’s altar has been lost. It is the place where we bring our own sacrifices as we wait to be united in communion with Our Lord and with each other, the Church.

The altar is the place of sacrifice in the Church, and as Christians we are all called to participate in that sacrifice. When we bring our personal offerings to God in the Mass, we are bringing them to the suffering Christ on the cross.

The Council of Trent taught this:

In this divine sacrifice that is celebrated in the Mass, the same Christ who offered Himself once in a bloody manner on the altar of the Cross is contained and is offered in an unbloody manner. [...] For, the victim is one and the same; the same now offers Himself through the ministry of priests who then offered Himself on the Cross; only the manner of offering is different. (DS 1743, Council of Trent, Session 22, Ch. 2)

Christ offers Himself through the priest, and we are the very witnesses of this sacrifice when we assist at the Sacrifice of the Mass. And Christ desires us to bring ourselves closer to Him and to actively participate in the Sacrifice of the Mass by making an interior offering of our acts of reparation, our daily struggles, and our prayers for others. We can make our prayers at the Offertory and during the Eucharistic prayer, but also when we present ourselves for

Communion. Therefore, going up to the altar rail and receiving our sacrificed Lord at the people's altar is the appropriate and beautiful consummation of our own individual offerings united with that of Christ on the Cross.

Trent teaches us that Christ takes our offerings and our sorrow for our sins and in return gives us mercy and grace:

Therefore, the holy council teaches that this sacrifice is truly propitiatory, so that, if we draw near to God with an upright heart and true faith, with fear and reverence, with sorrow and repentance, through it "we may receive mercy and find grace to help in time of need" [Heb 4:16] (DS 1743, Council of Trent, Session 22, Ch. 2)

The more reverently we approach His presence in the Sacrament, the more fully we participate through the exterior act of kneeling before the extension of the altar and the interior act of offering ourselves to Him, the greater the graces we receive will be.

But that is not all. In Colossians St. Paul talks about his own sacrifices in this way: "Now I rejoice in my sufferings for your sake, and in my flesh I complete what is lacking in Christ's afflictions for the sake of his body, that is, the church." (Col 1:24)

Our participation in the Sacrifice of the Mass, our own offerings are important for the salvation of our fellow Christians. We are called to join our sufferings with Christ's, to complete the sacrifice. The altar rail is a beautiful symbol of this offering. The use of the altar rail is coming back in some areas; priests are putting back ones that were taken down, parishes are using ones still intact at some Masses, and some churches never stopped using the altar rail. The truth about it is that the altar rail is meant to be an extension of the altar of sacrifice for the laity to kneel before, to consummate the sacrifice. We cannot receive at the main altar as priests do, but we can receive at the altar of the laity, the altar rail. It helps us to remember that Mass is a sacrifice, that Christ's one sacrifice is made present at every single Mass. The altar rail is a reminder for us that we can unite all of our sufferings, joys, and sacrifices with Christ for the sake of the Church and the whole world. And if it is our altar, maybe we should stop and reconsider some of the old thinking.

DAILY SCRIPTURE REFLECTIONS TWENTY-FIFTH WEEK 21 – 26 SEPTEMBER

Shining Brightly

Monday 21 September Feast St. Matthew, Apostle & Evangelist

Eph. 4:1-7, 11-13 Ps. 19:2-5 Mt. 9:9-13

Tradition has claimed the author of the first Gospel as Matthew on the basis of the name of the converted tax-collector mentioned in today's Gospel (Mt:9:9-13). While modern New Testament study sees the composition of the Gospels as a more complex process, today is an opportunity to celebrate the writer of the Gospel which has been our guide during the current liturgical year. The call of Matthew triggers a story about Jesus' table fellowship with the outcasts, 'tax collectors and sinners'. This gospel is the only one of the three accounts of the incident to quote explicitly the Old Testament saying 'what I want is mercy, not sacrifice'. Although the wording is that of Hosea 6:6, it is a constant theme of the prophetic critique of Israel's religious life.

The First Reading is an early Christian vision of the diversity in unity of vocation and of the Church. We are one body but have many callings and it is the harmonious working of all these different vocations – prophets, evangelists, pastors, teachers – that builds up the body of Christ.

The texts which we refer to as ‘gospels’ got that name because they were the products of evangelists such as a man named Matthew. Now these evangelist travelled from church to church giving their performances of the Good News and this particular Matthew whose gospel we are reading was doing this in the last decades of the first century: it was a task that required literary and theological skills, excellent performance skills, and (what we are apt to forget): stamina. It is therefore impossible that Matthew the Evangelist (who composed our text) and Matthew the Customs Official (mentioned in our text) are identical. So rather than imagine we have here an item of biography about the author of the gospel, we need to concentrate on two facts. First, that individuals are called to take up the specialist task of performing the good news in our assemblies: the example is Matthew called to be an Evangelist. And, second that Jesus broke the pious boundaries of His day: He called Matthew the Customs Official to be one of ‘The Twelve’ and He would be the table guest of sinners and tax collectors.

Jesus’ Family

Tuesday 22 September

Prv. 21:1-6, 10-13 Ps. 119:1, 27, 30, 34-35, 44 Lk. 8:19-21

“My mother and my brothers are those who hear the word of God and act on it.” (Lk. 8:21)

Perhaps you’ve wondered what it would be like to have a powerful and famous family member. What would it be like if your sibling or a parent were the President of the United States? Or a famous athlete? Or some other famous person? It probably would be the source of a certain joy and pride in a good way.

At the time Jesus walked on the Earth, He was becoming quite “famous,” so to speak. He was admired and loved and followed by many. And as He was speaking, His mother and brothers (which would have most likely been cousins) showed up outside. No doubt people looked at them with a certain respect and admiration and perhaps even a bit of jealousy. How nice it would be to be Jesus’ actual relative.

Jesus is quite aware of the blessing of being His own kin, part of His own family. For that reason He makes this statement as a way of inviting everyone present to see themselves as an intimate member of His family. Sure, our Blessed Mother will always retain her unique relationship with Jesus, but Jesus wants to invite all people to share His familial bond.

How does this happen? It happens when we “hear the Word of God and act on it.” It’s that simple. You are invited to enter the family of Jesus in a deep, personal and profound way if you but listen to all God says and then act on it.

Though this is simple on one level, it’s also true that it’s a very radical move. It’s radical in the sense that it requires a total commitment to the will of God. That’s because when God speaks, His words are powerful and transforming. And acting on His words will change our lives.

Reflect, today, upon the invitation of Jesus to be a member of His intimate family. Hear that invitation and say "Yes" to it. And as you say "Yes" to this invitation, be ready and willing to let His voice and His divine will change your life.

Lord, I accept Your invitation to become a member of Your intimate family. May I hear Your voice speak and act upon all that You say. Jesus, I trust in You.

Dealing With Rejection

Wednesday 23 September St. Pius of Pietrelcina (Padra Pio)

Prv. 30:5-9 Ps. 119:29, 72, 89, 101, 104, 163 Lk. 9:1-6

Gal. 2:19-20 Mt. 16:24-27

"And as for those who do not welcome you, when you leave that town, shake the dust from your feet in testimony against them." (Lk. 9:5)

This is a bold statement from Jesus. It's also a statement that should bolden us in the face of opposition.

Jesus had just finished telling His disciples to go from town to town preaching the Gospel. He instructed them not to bring extra food or clothing on the journey but, rather, to rely upon the generosity of those to whom they preach. And He acknowledged that some will not accept them. As for those who do in fact reject them and their message, they are to "shake the dust" from their feet as they leave the town.

What does this mean? It especially tells us two things. First, when we are rejected it can hurt. As a result, it's easy for us to sulk and stew over the rejection and hurt. It's easy to sit and be angry and, as a result, to allow the rejection to do us even more damage.

Shaking the dust from our feet is a way of saying that we ought not allow the hurt we receive to affect us. It's a way of making a clear statement that we will not be controlled by the opinions and malice of others. This is an important choice to make in life when facing rejection.

Secondly, it's a way of saying that we must keep moving on. Not only do we have to get over any hurt we have, but we need to then move on to seek out those who will receive our love and our message of the Gospel. So, in a sense, this exhortation from Jesus is not first about dealing with the rejection of others; rather, it's primarily about seeking out those who will receive us and will receive the message of the Gospel we are called to give.

Reflect, today, upon any hurt you still carry in your heart because of the rejection of others. Try to let go of it and know that God is calling you to seek out others in love so that you can share the love of Christ with them.

Lord, when I experience rejection and hurt, help me to let go of any anger I have. Help me to continue with my mission of love and to keep sharing Your Gospel with those who will receive it. Jesus, I trust in You.

Holy Curiosity

Thursday 24 September

But Herod said, "John I beheaded. Who then is this about whom I hear such things?" And he kept trying to see him. (Lk. 9:9)

Herod teaches us both some bad qualities as well as some good ones. The bad ones are quite obvious. Herod was living a very sinful life and, ultimately, his disordered life led him to have

St. John the Baptist beheaded. But the Scripture above does reveal one interesting quality which we should try to imitate.

Herod was interested in Jesus. "He kept trying to see him" the Scripture says. Though this did not ultimately lead to Herod accepting John the Baptist's original message and repenting, it was at least a first step.

For lack of better terminology, perhaps we can call this desire of Herod a "holy curiosity." He knew there was something unique about Jesus and he wanted to understand it. He wanted to know who Jesus was and was intrigued by His message.

Though we are all called to go much further than Herod did in the pursuit of the truth, we can still recognize that Herod is a good representation of many within our society. So many are intrigued by the Gospel and all that our faith presents. They listen with curiosity to what the pope says and how the Church reacts to injustices in the world. Additionally, society as a whole often condemns and criticizes us and our faith. But this still reveals a sign of its interest and desire to listen to what God has to say, especially through our Church.

Reflect, today, upon two things. First, reflect upon your own desire to know more. And when you discover this desire don't stop there. Allow it to draw you close to the message of our Lord. Secondly, be attentive to the "holy curiosity" of those around you. Perhaps a neighbor, family member or coworker has shown interest in what your faith and what our Church has to say. When you see that, pray for them and ask God to use you as He did the Baptist to bring His message to all who seek it.

Lord, help me to seek You in all things and at all times. When darkness closes in, help me to discover the light You have revealed. Then help me to bring that light to a world in great need. Jesus, I trust in You.

Who Do You Say That I Am?

Friday 25 September

"Who do the crowds say that I am?" They said in reply, "John the Baptist; others, Elijah; still others, 'One of the ancient prophets has arisen.'" Then he said to them, "But who do you say that I am?" Peter said in reply, "The Christ of God." (Lk. 9:18-20)

Peter got it right. Jesus was "the Christ of God." Many others spoke of Him as one who was only a great prophet, but Peter saw deeper. He saw that Jesus was uniquely the Anointed One who is of God. In other words, Jesus was God.

Though we know this to be true, we can sometimes fail to fully comprehend the depth of this "Mystery of Faith." Jesus is human, and He is God. This is hard to comprehend. It would have been hard for those of Jesus' time to comprehend this great mystery, also. Imagine sitting before Jesus listening to Him speak. If you were there before Him, would you have concluded that He is also the second Person of the Most Holy Trinity? Would you have concluded that He existed from all eternity and was the great I AM WHO AM? Would you have concluded that He was perfect in every way and that He was also the Creator of all things and the one who keeps all things in being?

Most likely none of us fully would have comprehended the true depth of the meaning that Jesus was "the Christ of God." We most likely would have recognized something special about Him, but would have failed to see Him for who He is in His full essence.

The same is true today. When we look at the Most Holy Eucharist, do we see God? Do we see the Almighty, Omnipotent, All-loving God who existed for eternity is the source of all good and is the Creator of all things? Perhaps the answer is both “Yes” and “No.” “Yes” in that we believe and “no” in that we do not fully understand.

Reflect, today, upon the divinity of Christ. Reflect upon Him present in the Most Holy Eucharist as well as His presence all around us. Do you see Him? Do you believe? How deep and complete is your faith in Him. Recommit yourself to a deeper understanding of who Jesus is in His Godhead. Try and take a step deeper in your faith.

Lord, I do believe. I believe You are the Christ of God. Help me to comprehend even more what that means. Help me to see Your divinity more clearly and to believe in You more fully. Jesus, I trust in You.

Meaning in Suffering

Saturday 26 September Sts. Cosmas & Damian (Martyrs)

Mary, Mother of Divine Hope

Eccl. 11:9-12:8 Ps. 90:3-6, 12-14, 17 Lk. 9:43-45

“Pay attention to what I am telling you. The Son of Man is to be handed over to men.” But they did not understand this saying; its meaning was hidden from them so that they should not understand it, and they were afraid to ask him about this saying. (Lk. 9:44-45)

So why was the meaning of this “hidden from them?” Interesting. Here Jesus tells them to “pay attention to what I am telling you.” And then begins to explain He will suffer and die. But they did not get it. They did not understand what He meant and “they were afraid to ask Him about this saying.”

The truth is that Jesus was not offended by their lack of understanding. He realized that they would not immediately understand. But this did not stop Him from telling them anyway. Why? Because He knew that they would come to understand in time. But, at first, the Apostles just listened in a bit of confusion.

When did the Apostles come to understand? They understood once the Holy Spirit descended upon them leading them into all Truth. It took the workings of the Holy Spirit to understand such deep mysteries.

The same is true with us. When we face the mystery of Jesus’ sufferings, and when we face the reality of suffering in our own lives or the lives of those we love, we can often be confused at first. It takes a gift from the Holy Spirit to open our minds to understand. Suffering is most often inevitable. We all endure it. And if we do not allow the Holy Spirit to work in our lives, suffering will lead us to confusion and despair. But if we allow the Holy Spirit to open our minds, we will begin to understand how God can work in us through our sufferings just as He brought salvation to the world through the sufferings of Christ.

Reflect, today, upon how well you understand both Jesus’ sufferings and your own. Are you allowing the Holy Spirit to reveal to you the meaning and even the value of suffering? Say a prayer to the Holy Spirit asking for this grace and let God lead you into this profound mystery of our faith.

Lord, I know You suffered and died for my salvation. I know that my own suffering can take on new meaning in Your Cross. Help me to more fully see and understand this great mystery and to find even greater value in Your Cross as well as mine. Jesus, I trust in You.

**SCHEDULE FOR THE WEEK OF
SUNDAY 20 SEPTEMBER - SUNDAY 27 SEPTEMBER**

Weekday Mass schedule is Tuesday – Saturday 8:30 a.m.

An additional Mass is celebrated on Wednesday at 6:30 a.m.

And on Thursday at 6:30 p.m.

Confessions are held on Wednesday between the two Masses

Thursday evening from 5:00 p.m. – 6:30 p.m.

Saturday 1:30 p.m. – 4:30 p.m.

Sunday 20 Sep

- 7:00 a.m. Mass
- 8:30 a.m. Mass
- 11:30 a.m. Mass
- 2:00 p.m. Parent Meeting

Monday 21 Sep Day off

No Mass

Tuesday 22 Sep

8:30 a.m. Mass

Wednesday 23 Sep

- 6:30 a.m. Mass
- 7:00 – 8:30 Confessions
- 8:30 a.m. Mass
- 6:00 p.m. Catechist Meeting

Thursday 24 Sep

- No Morning Mass (day long appointment)
- 5:00 p.m. Wedding Rehearsal
- 6:30 p.m. Mass
- 7:00 – 8:30 p.m. Meeting

Friday 25 Sep

- 8:30 a.m. Mass
- 2:00 p.m. Wedding
- 5:00 p.m. – 7:00 p.m. Adoration

Saturday 26 Sep

- 8:30 a.m. Mass
- 1:30 p.m. – 4:30 p.m. Confession
- 5:00 p.m. Mass

