



Orantes

Newsletter of the Office for Divine Worship
of the Diocese of Worcester

JUNE - JULY 2023

OFFICE FOR DIVINE WORSHIP
160 Mechanic Street
Leominster, MA 01453

508-798-0417
ofworship@worcesterdiocese.org

Reverend Alfredo Porras
Director

Elizabeth Marcil
Associate Director

Deacon Colin Novick
Assistant Director

Monsignor James P. Moroney
consultant

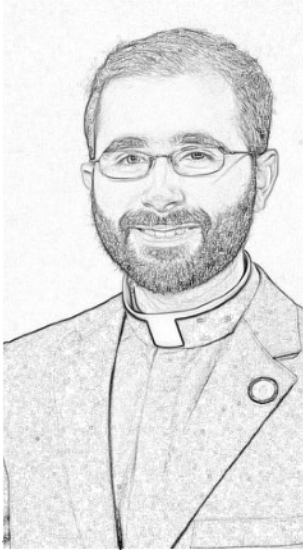
In August of 2022, this newsletter published a series of brief homily notes/bulletin inserts, drawn from the prayers and readings of each Sunday from September through December 2022. A second series was published in the December 2022 edition, running through June of this year.

With this issue, we publish a final series of weekly commentaries intended to be used as homily helps or bulletin inserts, running through the end of this calendar year. While some of the commentaries are excerpted from previous series, most have been originally composed in the hopes that these brief reflections will be helpful in continuing to foster a revival of Eucharistic belief and practice in the parishes of the Diocese of Worcester and beyond.

Orantes is also delighted to announce that Bishop McManus has appointed Father Alfredo Porras as the new Director of the Office for Divine Worship. Monsignor Moroney, the previous director, will remain as a consultant to the office and will continue to serve as editor of this publication.

Father Porras Appointed Director of the Office for Divine Worship

Bishop McManus has announced the appointment of Reverend Alfredo Porras as the new Director for the Office for Divine Worship, effective July 1, 2023. Father Porras has, up to now, served as Diocesan Master of Ceremonies and Associate Director of the Office for Worship.



Ordained as a Priest on 22 June, 2019, he holds a License in Sacred Theology with a specialization in Liturgy from the Pontifical University of the Holy Cross in Rome. The first Worcester Priest to be born in Venezuela, Father Porras is also a graduate of Holy Name Central Catholic Junior/Senior High School and was awarded a bachelor of science degree in Computer Science and Interactive Media & Game Development from Worcester Polytechnic Institute. He attended Mount St. Mary's Seminary in Emmitsburg, Maryland, and the Pontifical North American College in Rome.

Father Porras succeeds Monsignor James P. Moroney, who has been appointed as a consultant to the office and editor of the monthly newsletter *Orantes*.

Homily Notes for Eucharistic Revival

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2 July 2023

Thirteenth Sunday in Ordinary Time
The Divine Sacrifice



The prayer after Communion today describes the Mass as the “divine sacrifice” which we have offered and received.

Christ, of course, is the only one who offered the one “holy and living sacrifice” on the altar of the Cross, as he offered his life for our salvation. But in every Mass we too join the imperfect sacrifices of our lives to his one perfect sacrifice in the Church’s great act of worship to our Heavenly Father.

Thus do the Fathers of the Second Vatican Council teach us that “the divine sacrifice of the Eucharist,” is “the outstanding means whereby the faithful may express in their lives, and manifest to others, the mystery of Christ and the real nature of the true Church.”¹

This teaching echoes the Fathers of the Council of Trent, who insisted that in “this divine sacrifice which is celebrated in the Mass,” the same Christ “is contained and immolated in an unbloody manner, who once offered Himself in a bloody manner on the altar of the cross.”²

Just as we offer the Sacrifice of Christ through the hands of the priest in an unbloody manner, so too, do we receive the very Body and Blood of the same victim Christ in Holy Communion.

This Divine Sacrifice which we, a Royal Priesthood celebrate at every Mass is, then, both offered and received. Through it we join ourselves with Christ’s Paschal Sacrifice and receive his Most Holy Body and Blood.

¹ *Sacrosanctum Concilium*, no. 2,

² Council of Trent, “On the Sacrifice of the Mass,” chapter II.



9 July 2023

Fourteenth Sunday in Ordinary Time

Prize of Salvation: The Heavenly Banquet



In his letter to the Corinthians, Saint Paul reflects on the analogy of the runner in a race. “Every athlete exercises discipline in every way. They do it to win a perishable crown, but we an imperishable one. Thus I do not run aimlessly; I do not fight as if I were shadowboxing. No, I drive my body and train it, for fear that, after having preached to others, I myself should be disqualified.”¹

Thus does he describe the Christian’s pursuit of heaven, where “the crown of righteousness awaits me.”² That prize is also described in the Eucharistic prayer at today’s Mass as the place where we will sing as one grand chorus of joyous praise with all the angels and Saints: “Holy, Holy holy Lord, God of hosts, Heaven and earth are filled with your glory”!

The closing prayer for today’s Mass tells us that we may gain this prize of ceaseless praise by the gifts we have received at this Mass: the very Body and Blood of the Lord, the living bread come down from heaven. For the Lord has assured us that “if anyone eats of this bread, he will live forever, and the bread which I shall give for the life of the world is my flesh.”³

This is the the Bread of Angels which gives us the graces we need to make the journey to heaven, as we recall Christ’s promise to his disciples: “Truly, truly, I say to you, unless you eat the flesh of the Son of man and drink his blood, you have no life in you; he who eats my flesh and drinks my blood has eternal life, and I will raise him up at the last day.”⁴

¹ 1 Corinthians 9:23-27.

² 2 Timothy 4:8a.

³ John 6:51,

⁴ John 6:53-54.



16 July 2023

Fifteenth Sunday in Ordinary Time

The Saving Effects of the Eucharist



We will conclude today's Mass by praying "that by our participation in this mystery, its saving effects upon us may grow." In other words, the prayer suggests, our celebration of these sacred mysteries and reception of the Lord in Holy Communion change us.

First, we are made one in the Lord whose Body and Blood we have received. As he assured his disciples, "He who eats my flesh and drinks my blood abides in me, and I in him."¹ Another ancient text assures us that "on the feasts of the Lord, when the faithful receive the Body of the Son...life and resurrection are conferred on whoever receives Christ."²

Secondly, our souls are nourished and we are prepared for heaven. Just as physical food nourishes and sustains the body, the Eucharist is our spiritual nourishment, "giving life through the Holy Spirit."³ Thus is Holy Communion "the bread for our pilgrimage until the moment of death, when it will be given to us as viaticum."⁴

For the Mass is, as the ancient antiphon for Corpus Christi declares, the "sacred banquet in which Christ is received as food, the memory of his Passion is renewed, the soul is filled with grace and a pledge of the life to come is given to us."



¹ John 6:56.

² Fanqith, *Syriac Office of Antioch*, Vol. I, Comm., 237a-b; Cf. CCC, no. 1391.

³ *Presbyterorum Ordinis*, no. 5.

⁴ *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, no. 1392



23 July 2023
Sixteenth Sunday on Ordinary Time
The Gifts of Abel



The Prayer which the priest prays over the offerings today asks God to make the gifts of bread and wine holy, as God blessed the gifts of Abel.¹

This is not the only time in which the Church invokes the innocent victim of Cain from the book of Genesis. The ancient Roman Canon prays God to be “pleased to look upon these offerings with a serene and kindly countenance, and to accept them, as once you were pleased to accept the gifts of your servant Abel the just...”²

Notice that the prayer asks God to *accept our sacrifice*, which brings us to the heart of the story of Cain and Abel. For the reason Cain was so jealous of his brother Abel was that “The Lord had regard for Abel and his offering.”³

Genesis does not tell us precisely *why* God accepted Abel’s offering, although it does point out that Abel “brought the firstlings of his flock and of their fat portions.”⁴ The text, then, suggests that God was pleased with Abel’s offering because it was the best he had to offer.

Christ’s Sacrifice, to which he joins us at the Last Supper, is the offering of his very self. He is the priest and the sacrifice, the giver and the gift. He offers to the Father and gives to his disciples his own Body and Blood. What he offers to the Father is nothing less than himself, the only-begotten Son of God.

This is what Saint Paul calls the “fragrant offering and sacrifice to God,”⁵ “the holy and sacrifice, a spotless victim” offered on the Altar of the Cross for our salvation.

¹ Prayer over the Offerings from today’s Mass.

² *Roman Missal*, Eucharistic Prayer I.

³ Genesis 4:4.

⁴ Genesis 4:3-4.

⁵ Ephesians 5:2.



30 July 2023

Seventeenth Sunday in Ordinary Time

The Perpetual Memorial of Christ's Passion



After the Lord Jesus had instituted the Holy Eucharist on the night before he died for us, he turned to his disciples and said “Do this in memory of me.”

This “remembrance” is not the same as a fond memory of someone we loved or admired, however. Rather, it is a perpetual memorial of the Paschal Sacrifice of Christ, which is made present and in which we participate at every Mass celebrated in memory of his saving death and resurrection. As the *General Instruction of the Roman Missal* reminds us, “the sacrifice of his Cross and its sacramental renewal in the Mass, which Christ the Lord instituted at the Last Supper and commanded his Apostles to do in his memory, are one and the same, differing only in the manner of their offering...”¹

Pope Francis has reflected on “the perpetual memorial of the Passion” of Christ, which we speak of in the Opening Prayer for today’s Mass, noting that it “makes us participants in his victory over sin and death, and gives full meaning to our life.”²

Quoting the *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, the Holy Father reminded us that the Mass is “not merely the recollection of past events but makes them in a certain way present and real.”³ For “his Blood frees us from death and from the fear of death...Christ restores our life...[for]“By rising he destroyed death and restored life”⁴

¹ *General Instruction of the Roman Missal*, no. 2.

² Pope Francis, November 22, 2017.

³ *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, no. 1363.

⁴ Pope Francis, November 22, 2017, citing Eucharistic Prayer IV.



6 August 2023

Feast of the Transfiguration of the Lord

Transfiguration and Transubstantiation



Today we celebrate the Transfiguration of the Lord. It is a foreshadowing of the glory of the Lord, which we will come to know when he returns to judge the living and the dead; the same glory which we will praise forever in heaven, with all the angels and saints.

The prayer we pray after communion today provides us with a reflection on how this glorious mystery helps us to understand the Eucharist which we celebrate at this Mass. For just as Christ's body was transfigured on Mount Tabor, and simple bread and wine are transubstantiated at Mass into his Body and Blood, so are we "transformed into his likeness" by the Holy Communion we receive.

That likeness into which we were created is the image of the Only-Begotten Son of God, who became man out of love for us, and who offered his life on the Altar of the Cross for our salvation. He is the image of that perfect love, which is the invisible God, made visible in the passion and glory of his Only-Begotten Son.

Indeed, not only are we transformed into his radiant image, but, by our reception of his Body and Blood, we are made one with him who cleanses us from sin.¹



¹ Collect for today's Mass.



13 August 2023
Nineteenth Sunday in Ordinary Time
The Gifts Given



All is gift. There is nothing which we possess, nothing that we have accomplished, and nothing which we can hope for that is not God's gift, gratuitously given. As the sacred liturgy, reminds us, even our praise of God is itself his gift. "For, although you have no need of our praise, yet our thanksgiving is itself your gift since our praises add nothing to your greatness but profit us for salvation, through Christ our Lord."¹

Thus does Saint James warn us not to be deceived, for "all good giving and every perfect gift is from above, coming down from the Father of lights, with whom there is no alteration or shadow caused by change."²

The greatest gift we have received is the Holy Eucharist, the very Body and Blood of the Lord, who "hands himself over to the betrayer, the destroyer, and in so doing, overcomes the night, overcomes the darkness of evil."³

Even the gifts of bread and wine, and the gifts of ourselves are offered to God who first gave them to us. As we pray at every Mass, "we have received the bread we offer you: fruit of the earth and work of human hands, it will become for us the bread of life" and "we have received the wine we offer you: fruit of the vine and work of human hands, it will become our spiritual drink."

This is why we pray at this Mass by asking God to "accept the offerings of your Church, for in your mercy you have given them to be offered and by your power you transform them into the mystery of our salvation."⁴

¹ Eucharistic prayer II, Common Preface.

² James 1:16-17.

³ Pope Benedict XVI, 26 May 2005.

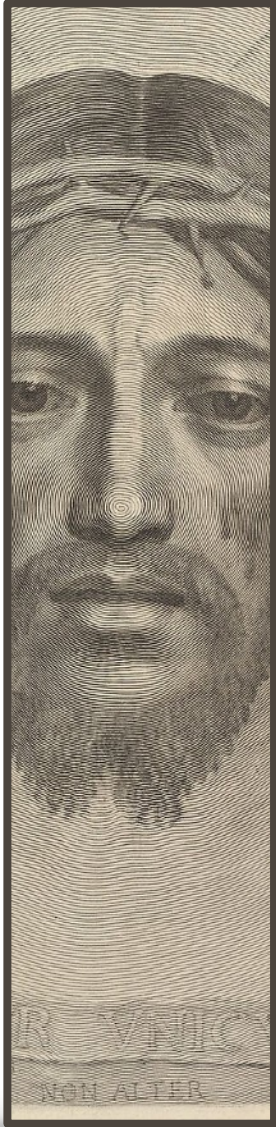
⁴ Prayer over the offerings from today's Mass.



20 August 2023

Twentieth Sunday in Ordinary Time

Good Things Which No Eye Can See



Each time we profess the Catholic Faith at Mass we declare that God has made all things, both visible and invisible; and while, at the end of time, we will come to know even that invisible realm, we can say with Saint Paul: “Eye has not seen, nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man, the things which God has prepared for them that love him.”¹

These are the “good things which no eye can see” of which our Opening Prayer reminded us today. Among these good things is the very face of God, the radiance of his glory and the company of all the Saints in communion with the living God.

Yet just because we have not seen, does not mean that we cannot believe. For the “yes” of Faith brings into focus the whole of this invisible reality, including the presence of Christ, Body and Blood, Soul and Divinity, in the Holy Eucharist.

We know that Christ is present in the Holy Eucharist because he told us so when he said, “Take this, all of you and eat of it, for this is my Body” and “Take this, all of you, and drink from it, for this is the Chalice of my Blood.”

Remember what one of the most venerable Catholic hymns from Benediction, the *Tantum Ergo* says?

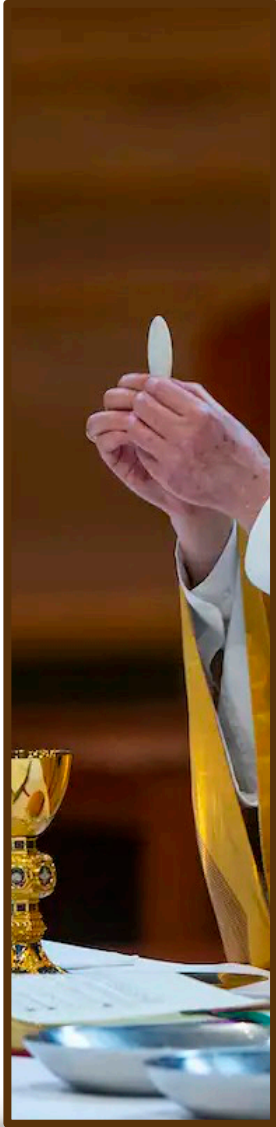
Down in adoration falling, Lo! the Sacred Host we hail,
Lo! o'er ancient forms departing, newer rites of grace prevail;
Faith for all defects supplying, where the feeble senses fail.

Our feeble sense of sight might tell us that the small piece of bread is just that, a small white host. But for the eyes of Faith it is the Lord, who gives us his Body and Blood that we might live in him and he might live in each one of us.

¹ 1 Corinthians 2:9.



27 August 2023
Twenty-First Sunday in Ordinary Time
The Food Which Perfects Us



The Prayer after Communion today speaks of the continuing effect which the Eucharist has in our lives after we have received Holy Communion at Mass today.

Complete within us, O Lord, we pray,
the healing work of your mercy
and graciously perfect and sustain us,
so that in all things we may please you.
Through Christ our Lord.

What “healing work of God’s mercy” takes place within our hearts after we received Holy Communion?

First, the reception of Christ’s Body and Blood brings us closer to the Lord, who lives in us as we live in him. For Christ has given his Body and Blood for us and for our salvation.

Secondly, the Eucharist gives us the graces to be strong in our Faith. It “preserves, increases, and renews”¹ the life of grace into which we entered in Baptism, restoring lost strength.

Third, the Eucharist places a longing for Heaven deep with our souls. We stand, as we pray at each Mass, “awaiting the blessed hope and the coming of our Savior, Jesus Christ.”

Finally, the Eucharist unites us with the Church in Heaven, which at Mass is, in a sense, already, but not yet.

¹ *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, no. 1392.



3 September 2023

Twenty-second Sunday in Ordinary Time

Celebrating in Mystery

What Will be Accomplished in Power



In the Prayer over the offerings today, the priest prays that ‘what we celebrate now in mystery might one day be accomplished in power.’

The Church has, since her first days, referred to the sacraments as “the mysteries.” For, like all the sacraments, the power of the Holy Eucharist comes from its origin in the Paschal Mystery, the saving passion, death and resurrection of the Lord.

The Bishops of our country recently published a teaching document called “The Mystery of the Eucharist in the Life of the Church,” in which they reflect on the presence of Christ Jesus in the Holy Eucharist as the “mystery of mysteries,” through which we are saved by him “who in the Paschal Mystery gave himself for us.”¹

The eucharistic mystery, then, leads us into the power of the Paschal Mystery, through which God “dispels wickedness, washes faults away, restores innocence to the fallen, and joy to mourners, drives out hatred, fosters concord, and brings down the mighty.”²

For through our celebration of this mystery, we are joined to Christ’s Paschal death and rising, by which he “broke the prison-bars of death and rose victorious from the tomb.”³



¹ Titus 2:14.

² *Roman Missal*, The Easter Proclamation.

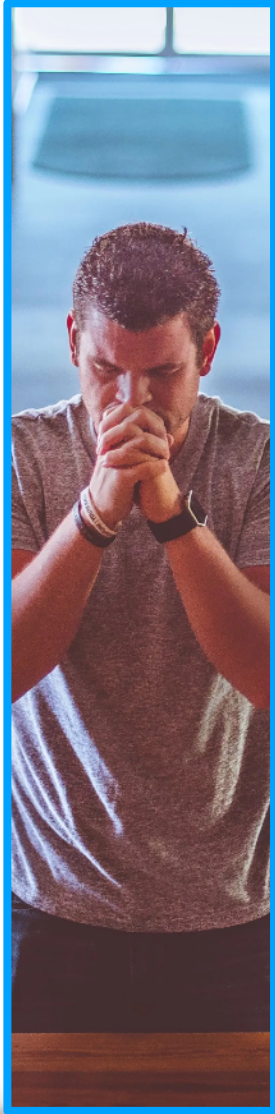
³ *Roman Missal*, The Easter Proclamation.



10 September 2023

Twenty-Third Sunday in Ordinary Time

Hungering for God in the Eucharist



“Like the deer that yearns for running streams,” the Psalmist tells us, “so my soul is yearning for you, my God; my soul is thirsting for God, the living God.”¹

How hungry we all are! Hungry for love, hungry for truth and hungry for meaning. We scour the internet, hoping to be satisfied by the next click, but come away unsatisfied and hungry to be loved by a real person who sees us as something other than just another customer.

All the while, the Lord waits for us, waits to nourish us and give us life through “the food of [his] Word and heavenly Sacrament.”² It is the food which satisfies every hunger.

As our beloved Pope emeritus once prayed at the beginning of a Corpus Christi procession:

In this procession we follow...Christ himself. And we ask of him: “Look on suffering humanity, [O Lord] cautiously seeking a way through so much doubt; look upon the physical and mental hunger that torments it. Give men and women bread for body and soul... Give them your very self, Give us your salvation!”³



¹ Communion Antiphon for this day.

² Cf. Collect for this day.

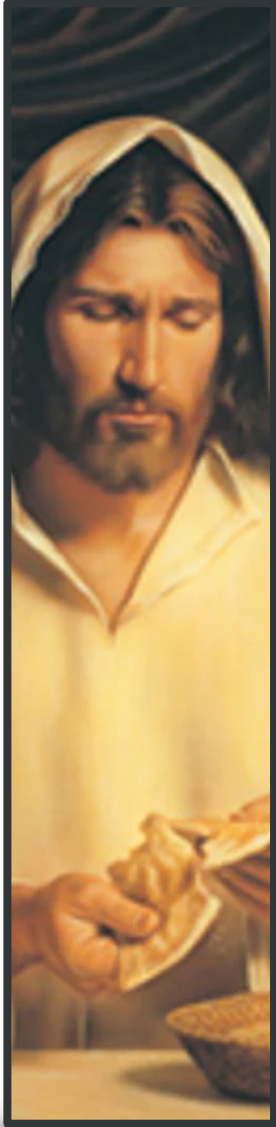
³ Pope Benedict XVI, 15 June, 2006.



17 September 2023

Twenty-fourth Sunday in Ordinary Time

The Food Which Nourishes Minds and Bodies



We are each in need of food, healthy food which will nourish our bodies and minds. Even when we grow older we can still hear our parents saying to us, “Eat your vegetables so you will grow up to be big and strong!” But there is another food which we need even more, a food which nourishes us spiritually, preparing us for eternal life. As the Prayer after Communion reminds us today, this food also nourishes our minds and bodies.

This Holy Eucharist which we receive in Communion is the very Body and Blood of Christ, true food and true drink which will sustain our bodies and minds on our journey to eternal life.¹ As manna, the first bread from heaven, sustained the chosen people on their way to the Promised Land, so the Eucharist, the Bread of Life sustains us on our journey to the Heavenly Banquet.

This Heavenly Bread sustains not only the bodies and minds of each of the baptized, but also makes the Body of Christ, which is the Church.² As Pope Saint John Paul II reminded us:

The Church draws her life from the Eucharist. This truth does not simply express a daily experience of faith, but recapitulates *the heart of the mystery of the Church*...Ever since Pentecost, when the Church, the People of the New Covenant, began her pilgrim journey towards her heavenly homeland, the Divine Sacrament has continued to mark the passing of her days, filling them with confident hope. The Second Vatican Council rightly proclaimed that the Eucharistic sacrifice is “the source and summit of the Christian life.”³ For the most holy Eucharist contains the Church's entire spiritual wealth: Christ himself, our passover and living bread.”⁴

¹ Cf. John 6:55–56.

² Cf. *Catechism of the Catholic Church* 1396.

³ Cf. *Lumen Gentium*, no. 11.

⁴ Pope Saint John Paul II, *Ecclesia de Eucharistia*, nos. 1-2.



24 September 2023

Twenty-Fifth Sunday in Ordinary Time

Offering the Sacrifice of our Lives



In just a few moments, as the gifts of Bread and Wine you have brought up in procession are placed upon the altar, the priest will ask God to receive “the offerings of your people, that what they profess with devotion and faith may be theirs through these heavenly mysteries.”

For that bread and wine, which will be brought on your behalf to this altar and placed into the hands of the Priest, is mixed with the sacrifices of your lives. With the wine in that cruet and the bread on that paten are mixed the joys and sorrows, the longings and holy desires of each person present. Those who bring up the gifts will be like the Magi bringing gifts to the Christ child. But these gifts are of an even greater value than gold, frankincense, and myrrh, for these are the gifts of our lives.

The French poet Paul Claudel once wrote of this moment: “Your prayers, and your faith, and your blood, with his in the Chalice. These, like the water and wine, form the matter of his sacrifice.”¹

You will place those gifts into the hands of the Priest, offering them to Christ. Then the Priest, acting in the person of Christ, will place them upon the altar in the same way that Christ placed his body upon the altar of the Cross in a perfect sacrifice of praise. These are the gifts that will be transformed by the great Eucharistic Prayer into the very Body and Blood of Christ, and then returned to you as nourishment, that you might have the strength to continue to join ourselves with Christ's sacrifice every day of your lives.

¹ Paul Claudel, *The Mass: Christians Around the Altar*, by the community of Saint-Severin (Geoffrey Chapman, London: 1958), page 33.



1 October 2023

Twenty-Sixth Sunday in Ordinary Time

The Eucharist as Wellspring of all Blessings



Just before we receive Holy Communion, the priest holds up the Body and Blood of the Lord and declares: “Behold the Lamb of God, behold him who takes away the sins of the world. Blessed are those called to the supper of the Lamb.”

These words, taken from the Book of Revelation,¹ echo the cry of John the Baptist just before the Baptism of Jesus in the Jordan River and look forward to the time when we will sit at the heavenly banquet in the Kingdom of Heaven.

The “Ecce” prayer reminds us that we are about to receive in time what we will know face to face at the supper of the Lamb, “the wellspring of all blessing.”²

We respond, in the words of the Centurion: “Lord, I am not worthy that you should enter under my roof, but only say the word and my soul shall be healed.”

Like the Centurion who went to Jesus asking that his servant be healed,³ we know that we are not worthy for Jesus to enter into our lives. But, like the Centurion, we trust in God's mercy, knowing that the power of Christ's mercy to free us from our sins is greater than even our weaknesses.

Once the Centurion had professed his faith in Jesus' power to heal, the Lord responded to him: “You may go; as you have believed, let it be done for you.” Having repented of our sins, we now approach the table of the children of God to receive the bread of life and the cup of eternal salvation.

¹ Revelation 19:9.

² Prayer over the Offerings for this day.

³ Matthew 8:5-13.



8 October 2023

Twenty-Seventh Sunday in Ordinary Time

The Very Body and Blood of Christ



In Holy Communion, we receive more than we could ever have hoped for. As we prayed a few minutes ago in the Collect, this gift of Christ's Body and Blood surpasses all our "merits and the desires"¹ to pardon what our consciences dread "and to give what prayer does not dare to ask."²

For in Holy Communion we receive the very Body and Blood of Christ. As we recall at every Mass, on the night before he died, Jesus took bread and said "This is my Body... This is my Blood." So, while the outward appearance of the bread and wine remain unchanged, the substance of both has been changed into the Body and Blood of Christ whole and entire, God and Man.³ Indeed, under the appearance of bread and wine, Christ is present "in a true, real and substantial way, with his Body and his Blood, with his Soul and his Divinity."⁴

What's more, he gives us his Body and Blood as our food for our journey through life, as our spiritual nourishment. *Take and eat... take and drink*, he commands us, for his Body and Blood is given for us, that our sins might be forgiven.

For, though we are many, we are made one body in him, "we all partake of the one Bread and one Chalice."⁵ This is what the Church means when she prays that we might be "transformed into what we consume,"⁶ that "partaking of the Body and Blood of Christ, we may be gathered into one by the Holy Spirit."⁷

¹ Collect for this day.

² Collect for this day.

³ *Compendium of the Catechism of the Catholic Church*, no. 283.

⁴ *Compendium of the Catechism of the Catholic Church*, no. 282.

⁵ Communion Antiphon for this day.

⁶ Prayer after Communion for this day.

⁷ Eucharistic Prayer II.



15 October 2023
Twenty-eighth Sunday in Ordinary Time
Sharers in His Divine Nature



The Prayer after Communion at today's Mass reminds us that in our celebration of the Eucharist and reception of Holy Communion, we become sharers of Christ's divine nature. We recall this at every Mass when the priest places a small amount of water into the wine that the preparation of the gifts, as he prays: "By the mystery of this water and wine, may we come to share in the divinity of Christ, who humbled himself to share in our humanity."

Water is perhaps the most common of elements, while wine has always been seen as a more precious drink. This ancient prayer compares us to common water and the divinity of Christ to a precious wine. By becoming one with him in Holy Communion, we participate in his divinity.

As Saint Athanasius put it in the fourth century, "God became man, so that man might become like God."

Indeed, the Eucharist is the primary means of our sharing in Christ's divine nature, as the Lord himself taught us. For the Eucharist gives us eternal life, that we might dwell in God's glory forever. This bread is Christ himself, who we "receive," that he might dwell in us and we might dwell in him.





22 October 2023

Twenty-Ninth Sunday in Ordinary Time

Hungering for God in the Eucharist



I've been watching what I weigh with the *Noom* app lately, which is all the rage. All you have to do is type in what you ate and it will tell you the calories and what category of food it falls in (green, yellow or red). Green food is the best for you, for it will fill you up without running up the number of calories. We want to eat what is *good* for us, but what about what is *best* for us?

In the Holy Eucharist we receive the very Body and Blood of the Lord, mysteries which cleanse us from sin and death.¹ Yes, even death.

As we will pray in the Prayer after Communion today, what we receive today in Holy Communion is the food which prepares us to receive the gift of eternal life.² For the Lord Jesus has promised that "Whoever eats my flesh and drinks my blood remains in me and I in him,"³ and I will raise him to eternal life on the last day."⁴

As a priest, I have been frequently overwhelmed by the faith of those who receive the consecrated host a short time before they die. You can see it in their eyes, the same eyes that as a little kid gazed upon Christ's Body the first time. There's a trust in those eyes that God, who has been with them at every Mass throughout their lives, will not abandon them now.

Rather, you can imagine them seeing face-to-face the one whom they have received so many times. For then they will see clearly, the one whom they have believed is present, Body, Blood, Soul and Divinity" in each Holy Communion. Which is why we pray with the centurion at every Mass: "Lord, I am not worthy that you should come under my roof, but only say the word and my soul shall be healed."

¹ Cf. Prayer over the Offerings for this day.

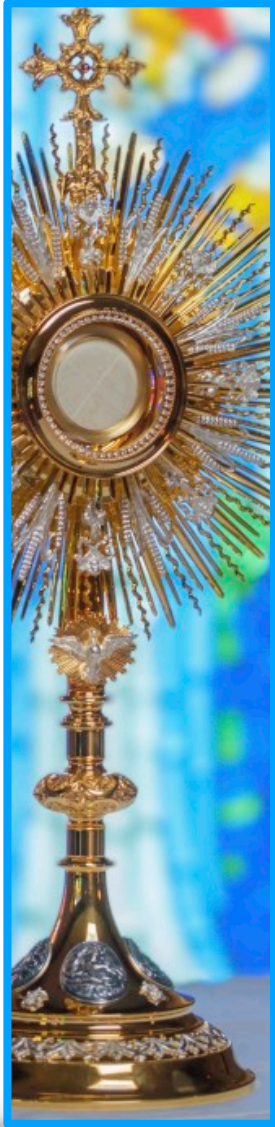
² Prayer after Communion for this day.

³ John 6:56.

⁴ John 6:54.



29 October 2023
Thirtieth Sunday in Ordinary Time
The Sacrifice which Heals



Moses longed to see God's face, but all he saw was a burning bush. Perhaps it is part of the human condition that we constantly seek to see God's face.¹ For to see God, to dwell in the light of his face, is to be suffused with his healing love.

This is why we not only receive the Lord in Holy Communion, but adore him in the Blessed Sacrament, the same Christ who continues to be present under the form of bread when we reserve the Eucharist in the Tabernacle.

Indeed, the Church even provides us with the opportunity to spend time with Christ in the Blessed Sacrament exposed in a monstrance, so that we might gaze upon the Body of the Lord for an extended period of time. Such adoration is accompanied by prayers, songs and devotions centered on Christ present in our midst. Pope Saint Paul VI once spoke beautifully of Eucharistic Adoration in these words:

...the devotion which leads the faithful to visit the Blessed Sacrament draws them into an ever deeper participation in the Paschal Mystery. It leads them to respond gratefully to the gift of him who through his humanity constantly pours divine life into the members of his body. Dwelling with Christ our Lord, they enjoy his intimate friendship and pour out their hearts before him for themselves and their dear ones, and pray for the peace and salvation of the world.

Thus the celebration of the Eucharist, the source and summit of our lives, leads us to the adoration of the same Christ we receive in Holy Communion. Likewise, that adoration leads us to a deeper participation in the Sacred Mysteries and a more authentic living out of the life we have received in Christ, that the Lord might perfect in us what we received in his most holy Body and Blood.²

¹ Entrance Antiphon for this day.

² Cf. Prayer after Communion for this day.



5 November 2023
Thirty-first Sunday in Ordinary Time
The Sacrifice of Praise



The Roman Canon is the longest and the oldest of the Eucharistic Prayers. It uses a phrase to refer to the Mass and our participation in it that is taken from the letter to the Hebrews: “let us continually offer [to] God a *sacrifice of praise*.”¹

At every Mass the priest, with us and on our behalf, offers the perfect sacrifice of Christ. Thus, at every Mass, we take part in the sacrifice which Christ, our great High Priest, offered for our salvation on the altar of the Cross.

Our participation in that sacrifice, however, is not limited to that of a mere spectator. Rather, we are called to join all the sacrifices of our lives to that one perfect sacrifice. That means that we are called to place our lives upon the altar as a sacrifice of praise, made one in Holy Communion with Christ upon the Cross.

That is why the priest exhorts us to pray that *my sacrifice and yours* may be acceptable to God the Father Almighty. This is also why we bring forward gifts of bread and wine to be offered for the sacrifice, gifts which are mixed with the sacrifices of our lives which are joined to the perfect sacrifice of Christ which is offered by the priest on our behalf.

When Saint Leo the Great recalled that “our participation in the Body and Blood of Christ aspires to nothing other than to become what we receive,”² he was encouraging us to join our lives to the sacrifice of Christ upon the Cross and make of them a daily sacrifice of praise.

This is what we mean when, after Communion, we pray today that “renewed by these heavenly Sacraments, we may be prepared by your gift for receiving what they promise.”³

¹ Hebrews 13:15.

² Saint Leo the Great, *Sermo* 12, *De Passione* 3, 7, PL 54,

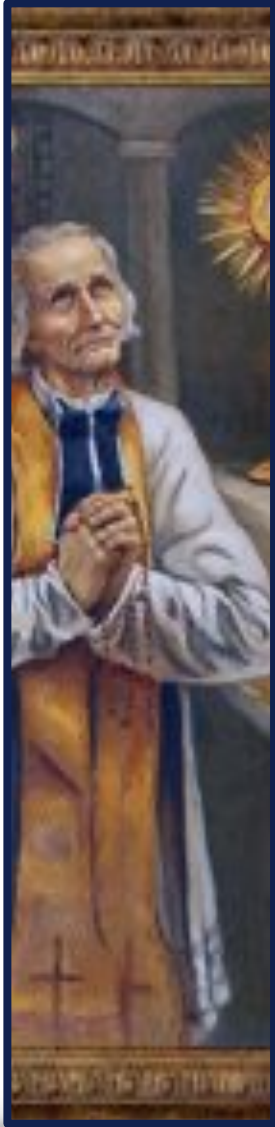
³ Prayer after Communion for this day.



12 November 2023

Thirty-second Sunday in Ordinary Time

The Sacrifice that Changes Lives



Since I was a little kid, I have always tried (well, almost always) to stay out of trouble. But why? When I was a little kid it was so I would not be caught and punished. But why should I try to avoid trouble and its accompanying adversity as a fully-grown Christian?

The Collect at today's Mass urges us to avoid adversity, "so that, unhindered in mind and body alike, we may pursue in freedom of heart the things that are" of God.¹

In other words, the whole aim of the Christian life and the whole reason for going to Holy Communion is to become more Godly in what we say and do. St Leo the Great put it this way: "our participation in the Body and Blood of Christ aspires to nothing other than to become what we receive."²

That's why the Deacon sometimes dismisses us at Mass by saying "Go in peace, glorifying the Lord by your life." Not only do we bring the sacrifices of our lives to Mass, to be joined to the perfect sacrifice of Christ upon the altar, but we then receive from that altar the very Body and Blood of Christ which gives us the grace we need to offer our lives as a sacrifice to God after we go home from Mass.

That is why St John Mary Vianney used to urge the folks in his parish to "Come to communion.... It is true that you are not worthy of it, but you need it."³

¹ Collect for this day.

² Saint Leo the Great, *Sermo* 12, *De Passione* 3, 7, PL 54.

³ Bernard Nodet, *Le curé d'Ars. Sa pensée - Son coeur*, ed. Xavier Mappus, Paris 1995, p. 119.



19 November 2023

Thirty-third Sunday in Ordinary Time

The Sacrifice of Everlasting Happiness



Do you remember the last time you saw an old friend and embraced them with joy? That embrace came from your heart, the same place where you felt such deep joy at being in their presence.

If we experience joy at being in the presence of an old friend, how much deeper is that joy in being in the presence of Christ. This is why we ask God that in the offering of the gifts of bread and wine on this altar we might gain “the prize of everlasting happiness.”¹

The Liturgy also quotes from the Prophet Jeremiah today, who tells us that happiness is to be near God.² So too, the “joy of the community, the joy of the whole Church [is found] in contemplating and adoring the Most Holy Sacrament, recognizing in it the real and permanent presence of Jesus, the Eternal High Priest.”³

Do you remember the song that goes “I received the Living God, and my heart is filled with joy.”?

Think of all those times when you went to Communion and felt the peace the world cannot give, the joy which is beyond all understanding. It is the feeling of *knowing* that God so loved the world (and you!), that his Only Son chose to give his life for you and to give you his very Body and Blood as food and drink...to live in you, that you might live in him.

That is perfect joy.

¹ Prayer over the Offerings for this day.

² Cf. Communion Antiphon for this day.

³ Benedict XVI, 3 June 2010.



2 November 2023

Our Lord Jesus Christ, King of the Universe

The Only Path to Peace



We spend a lot of time looking for peace. Peace in Ukraine, peace in our country, peace on our streets, peace in our families and peace in our hearts. We look for that peace in all sorts of places: in diplomacy, in good governance, in law enforcement, in couples' counseling and in God.

The secret we often fail to heed, however, is that true peace is only found in God.

That's why, just before we receive Holy Communion, we ask God at every Mass to give us peace "that, by the help of your mercy, we may be always free from sin and safe from all distress, as we await the blessed hope and the coming of our Savior, Jesus Christ."

Only then do we receive Holy Communion, the "sacrifice of our reconciliation" which advances "the peace and salvation of all the world."¹ For in this sacrifice, the human race is reconciled to God, and Christ bestows on all nations "the gifts of unity and peace."²

We receive the peace of Christ not only from the reception of Holy Communion, but also through out adoration of Christ present in the Blessed Sacrament. As Pope Benedict XVI so beautifully described it in a homily on Corpus Christi in 2008:

Adoration is prayer that prolongs the celebration and Eucharistic communion and in which the soul continues to be nourished: it is nourished with love, truth, peace; it is nourished with hope, because the One before whom we prostrate ourselves does not judge us, does not crush us but liberates and transforms us.³

¹ Eucharistic prayer III.

² Prayer over the Offerings for this day.

³ Pope Benedict XVI, 22 May 2008.



3 December 2023
First Sunday of Advent
A Communion in Hope



Today we begin the great season of waiting. As we say in every Mass: “we wait in joyful hope for the coming of our Lord, Jesus Christ.”

Indeed, our whole lives are caught up in Christ and in a great Mystery which is already, but not yet. Christ is as present in the Eucharist, in his Body and Blood as he was when he walked the roads of Galilee, while as we eat his Body and drink his Blood, we wait for him to come again in glory. Thus, as we “celebrate devoutly here below” these Sacred Mysteries, we await “the prize of eternal redemption.”¹

The world is passing away, as Saint John reminds us.² I’m reminded of this whenever I walk through an old cemetery and look at what once was a beautiful and expensive monument to some once famous person. Today, you can no longer read their name and the stone is worn and covered with moss.

Only what comes from God and is joined to God lasts, and as a pledge of immortality and a promise of his coming, we receive the very Body and Blood of the Lord. Indeed, as the Prayer after Communion reminds us, even “as we walk amid passing things, [the Lord teaches] us by them to love the things of heaven and hold fast to what endures.”³

¹ Prayer over the Offerings for this day.

² 1 John 2:17.

³ Prayer after Communion for this day.



10 December 2023
Second Sunday of Advent
The Food which Teaches



We come to Mass to be fed, or, as we will pray after Communion today, to be “replenished by the food of spiritual nourishment.”

This food comes in two courses. The first course is the word of God which is proclaimed from the Holy Scriptures, wherein “Christ is present in his word, as he carries out the mystery of salvation, sanctifies humanity and offers the Father perfect worship.”¹

The second course is our celebration of the “holy and living sacrifice” which Christ offered from the altar of the Cross for our salvation. Here we receive the very Body and Blood, soul and divinity of Christ, for as the Lord himself taught us, “Whoever eats my flesh and drinks my blood remains in me and I in him.”

Thus, through Word and Sacrament Christ comes to live in us and we are taught to “judge wisely the things of earth and hold firm to the things of heaven.”²

Our reception of Christ in Word and Sacrament also foreshadow heaven, where, seated at the heavenly banquet, we will dwell in the presence of the Victorious Lamb. There will be no more need of words or earthly food on that day, for we shall know him face to face. On that day we will be one with him in glory, joining our voices with the song of the angels forever in perfect peace.

You can almost hear it in the voices joined together in this church today:

Holy, holy, holy lord God of hosts.
Heaven and earth are full of your glory.
Hosanna in the highest.
Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord.
Hosanna in the highest.

¹ *Introduction to the Lectionary for Mass*, no. 4.

² Prayer after Communion.



17 December 2023
Third Sunday of Advent
Rejoicing in the Eucharist



In these days of Advent we prepare ourselves for the Incarnation of the Lord, for a celebration of his coming among us as the word made flesh. On this Sunday in particular we “rejoice in the Lord,”¹ “to attain the joys of so great a salvation.”²

As our beloved Pope emeritus once declared, “where is the source of Christian joy to be found if not in the Eucharist, which Christ left us as spiritual food while we are pilgrims on this earth?”³

For each time you receive Holy Communion, you receive Christ himself, united to him like branches to a vine,⁴ and he remains in you as you remain in him. His love enters into your heart and your life that you might love others as he has first loved you.⁵

Thus, in Holy Communion with the Lord we come to know perfect joy, “the joy of love and the joy to be loved.”⁶

As Mother Teresa once wrote:

The coming of Jesus at Bethlehem brought joy to the world and to every human heart. The same Jesus comes again and again in our hearts during Holy Communion. He wants to give the same joy and peace. May his coming this Christmas bring to each one of us that peace and joy that he desires to give. Let us pray much for this grace of peace and joy in our own heart, in our communities, in our Society, and in the Church.⁷

¹ Entrance Antiphon for this day.

² Collect.

³ Pope Benedict XVI, 18 March 2007.

⁴ cf. Jn 15:1-8.

⁵ Jn 13:34.

⁶ Pope Benedict, , 18 March 2007.

⁷ Mother Teresa, in *Jesus, The Word to be Spoken*, by Father Angelo D. Scolozzi.



24 December 2023
Fourth Sunday of Advent
Like the Dewfall



Isaiah gives us the defining image for today's Mass, as we prepare for the Incarnation of the Lord at Christmas. Indeed, the Church cites the prophet in the Entrance Antiphon for today: "Drop down dew from above, you heavens, and let the clouds rain down the Just One; let the earth be opened and bring forth a Savior."¹

It is this passage which inspires the Second Eucharistic Prayer, when we call upon God to:

Make holy, therefore, these gifts, we pray,
by sending down your Spirit upon them like the dewfall,
so that they may become for us
the Body and + Blood of our Lord Jesus Christ.

Likewise, the Prayer over the Offerings asks that the Holy Spirit make holy the gifts we have placed upon the altar, "just as he filled with his power the womb of the Blessed Virgin Mary."

In the days to come, we will sing a hymn which goes back to the early eighteenth century, *Hark, the Herald Angels Sing*. It recalls how "Christ, the everlasting Lord" has come in time, "offspring of the Virgin's womb." Then follows these beautiful and profound lines:

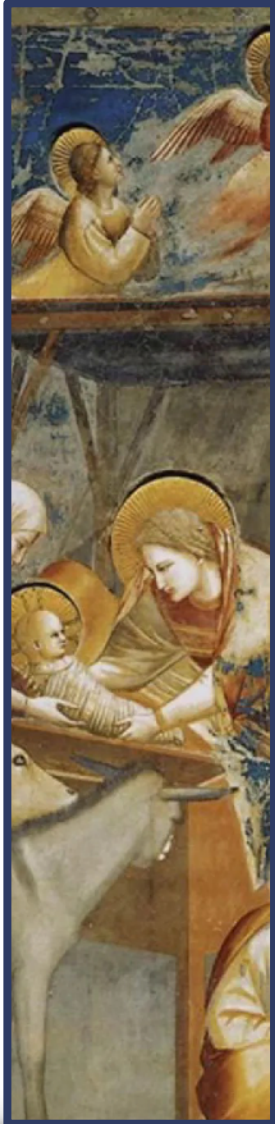
Veiled in flesh the Godhead see;
hail th'incarnate Deity,
pleased with us in flesh to dwell,
Jesus, our Emmanuel.

This hymn, then, is as much about the Eucharist we celebrate and the Holy Communion we receive as it is about the Word made flesh who came to save us. For he is the one and the same Christ who, on the night before he died for us, took bread and said '*take and eat...take and drink...for this is my Body and Blood, given for you.*'"

¹ Cf. Isaiah 45:8.



25 December 2023
The Nativity of the Lord
Christmas and Communion



The Collect for this morning's Mass quotes from a prayer prayed quietly by the priest at every Mass. He prays as he mixes a drop of water into the wine in the chalice "that we may come to share in the divinity of Christ, who humbled himself to share in our humanity."

Christmas, then, is the perfect time to meditate upon the gift of Christ's presence in the Holy Eucharist. For just as the Word became flesh in a manger in Bethlehem, so Christ is given to us as "real food" in the Mass, as "the source and summit of the Christian life"¹

This is why we join our voices with the Christmas song of the angels at Mass today: "Glory to God in the highest and peace to his people on earth."

Both in the redemptive mystery of Christmas and by the flesh of the Son of Man which we receive in Holy Communion, we experience the mystery of God's redemptive love:

For, by his Incarnation, he, the Son of God, has in a certain way united himself with each man. He worked with human hands; he thought with a human mind. He acted with a human will, and with a human heart he loved. Born of the Virgin Mary, he has truly been made one of us, like to us in all things save sin."²

Christmas and Holy Communion are really part of the same mystery and a fulfillment of the vision of the Book of Revelation:

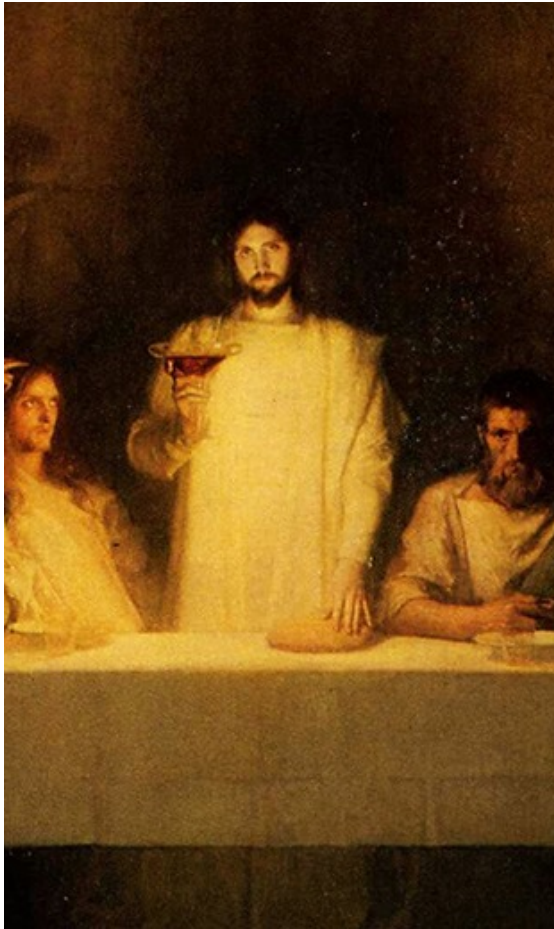
Behold, the dwelling of God is with men. He will dwell with them, and they shall be his people, and God himself will be with them.³

¹ *Lumen Gentium*, no. 11; cf. *Sacrosanctum Concilium*, No. 10.

² *Gaudium et Spes*, no. 22.

³ Revelation 21:3.

Diocesan Prayer for Eucharistic Revival



Lord Jesus Christ,
who by the gift of your Body and Blood,
are really present in our lives,
hear the prayers of the Church in Worcester.

Give us the faith of your Church, confident
in your presence in our Masses, our
tabernacles and our lives.

Give us the faith
to offer our lives to you,
joined with the perfect sacrifice,
which you offered on the altar of the Cross.

Good and loving Shepherd,
teach us how to lead your children home,
that we might long together
to glorify your name
at the Supper of the Lord.

For you are Lord, forever and ever. Amen.

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