

2021 Year of the Eucharist and St. Joseph
Homily Aid: Fifth Sunday in Ordinary Time – February 7, 2021
The Church Gathered in the Presence of God

- Throughout the past 12 months, we can relate with the sentiments of Job found in the first reading (“months of misery... troubled nights...I am filled with restlessness”).
 - However, in the Responsorial Psalm, we hear the promise of God that we might be able to say, “Praise the Lord, who heals the broken hearted.”
 - Our God comes to heal our pain, calm our anxieties, and restore us to life.
 - We see this in the Gospel when Jesus enters the home of Peter and Andrew and sees Peter’s mother-in-law sick. He held her tenderly by the hand and raised both her body and her spirit.
- This Sunday, we continue our explanation of the parts of the Mass by focusing on the beginning. The Church being gathered here together in the presence of God. Jesus Christ who comes to us – as a people of God – to heal, calm, and restore our souls.
- Mass begins with a sometimes overlooked, but important symbolic action – the Entrance Procession. This **procession** accomplishes many things for the community.
 - The procession moves from the doors of the church to the sanctuary. The priest and ministers (who represent all of the people of God) symbolically move from the ordinary (the world) to the extraordinary (the sanctuary, a symbol of heaven itself) – from the secular to the sacred, the everyday to the eternal.
 - When we see the procession happening, we unite our minds and hearts together in prayer to encounter our God just as we can image the Apostles in the Gospel as they tell Jesus about Peter’s sick mother-in-law. They believe and know that something extraordinary will be brought by God.
 - Upon entering into the holy (think also of the Holy of Holies in the Temple of Jerusalem), the sanctuary, the priest immediately reverences the altar with a kiss.
- Why reverence the altar with a kiss? What does it symbolize? What is its importance?
 - The altar represents **Christ himself**. When we see the priest kiss the altar, reverence the Lord in your hearts. We reach out to the Lord as all of the sick in the Gospel reached out to him seeking healing.
 - “We are to understand the temple and the altar as Christ himself” (St. Augustine)
 - “Above all, the main altar should be so placed and constructed that it is always seen to be the sign of Christ Himself, the place at which the saving mysteries are carried out, and the center of the assembly, to which the greatest reverence is due” (*Eucharisticum mysterium* 24)
 - The altar reminds us of those **saints and martyrs** who gave their lives in service of Christ. In Revelation 6:9, we see the martyrs under the altar in the heavenly liturgy. It is for this reason that when an altar is consecrated, relics of saints/martyrs are placed within it – to more fully remind us of their union with Christ and their personal self-offering. In the Mass, in the symbol of the altar, we recognize we are with Christ and his saints.
- After the priest reverences the altar, we begin with the **Sign of the Cross**.
 - This is in fact a *prayer* in and of itself. It is not an introduction to prayer. It *is* prayer!
 - This prayer/sign contains within itself the two greatest mysteries of the Christian faith.
 - The Trinity: directly affirming our faith in the Triune God – a relational God who seeks dialogue – Father/Son/Holy Spirit
 - We recall our baptism when we were baptized in the name of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit
 - The Paschal Mystery: the sign of the cross, making a cross over oneself; reminder of the great act of love of Christ; Suffering and dying for our sins and for our redemption.
 - Marked with sign of Christ as we see in Revelation and Ezekiel (9:3-4)
 - When we pray this prayer, we remember the reality that our God who desires to bring us into communion with himself and loves us to the point of offering his very body to the point of death on the Cross.
- The first moments of Mass must not be overlooked. This is why it is so important to prepare our minds and hearts for Mass by arriving early and quieting our souls to see God!
 - It’s the moment when we recognize who we are – a people of God – the Body of Christ – a people gathered together with Christ, the angels and saints, and our fellow brothers and sisters in the faith to worship our God and Father who loves us completely and wants to share himself with us.
 - We should also recognize where we are; standing with Christ and the whole Church in the heavenly celebration.
 - We have left the world for a small moment to commune with God to worship him and allow him to encounter our hearts.
 - When Peter’s mother-in-law was healed by Jesus, she immediately began to care for him and the apostles in her home.
 - For the rest of this Mass, may we give worship to God as his chosen people and ready to be restored by him to serve those in our lives this week.