Year of the Eucharist and St. Joseph

Homily Aid: January 2, 2022 (Feast of the Epiphany) – Blessing and Dismissal

- “Rise up in splendor...your light has come, the glory of the Lord shines upon you...upon you the Lord shines” (Isaiah 60:1-2)
  - My friends, our God is not a hidden God, but a God who reveals Himself, a God who is always drawing near to us, desiring to be known and to pour out His love and blessing upon all humanity
  - This truth about God is precisely what we celebrate today on the Feast of the Epiphany – which means the manifestation of God
    - We hear today in the Gospel of the star that guides and reveals to the magi where the Christ child is; to these magi, God reveals Himself in Jesus, who has come as the savior of all
  - This feast is a particularly fitting way to conclude our preaching series on Mass for the Year of the Eucharist and St. Joseph, for each time we celebrate Mass the Lord continues to reveal or manifest himself to us
- Our final topic is the Blessing and Dismissal, which are quite short in length, but great in significance for they help to demonstrate where everything in the Mass – our worship and encounter with God – is leading us
  - Following the Prayer after Communion, the Concluding Rites begin and include: the greeting from the priest (“The Lord be with you”), the Final Blessing, the Dismissal, and the reverencing of the altar
- Having been fed by the Lord from the table of His living Word and from the altar of His Body and Blood, the priest brings the celebration of the Mass to a conclusion in a way similar to how we began, namely, with the Sign of the Cross
  - At the end of Mass, the priest does this by invoking the blessing of Almighty God (the Father, and the Son, and the Holy Spirit) while making the Sign of the Cross over the people in blessing
    - For certain celebrations and seasons there can be a Solemn Blessing (or Prayer Over the People) which is preceded by the instruction to “Bow Down for the Blessing” in order to lead the community more deeply into the mystery that we have celebrated
- The Final Blessing & the Dismissal are integrally linked; they further establish the truth of the identity and mission of the Christian community as a people who have been called, formed, and sent by God
  - People and things are blessed for a purpose. God called Abraham in order to form a holy people and God blessed him so that through him all families of the earth would be blessed (Genesis 12)
  - This idea of blessing takes on an added significance with Christ in and through whom we have been baptized and become sharers in the Divine life: “it is no longer I who live, but Christ who lives in me” (Galatians 2:20); Christ dwells in us and desires to continue His saving ministry through us
    - This is real, this is powerful, and this is precisely why the Catechism of the Catholic Church states clearly that “every baptized person is called to be a blessing and to bless” (CCC, 1669)
  - The blessing of Almighty God, therefore, is invoked at the end of Mass to further aid us in our identity/call to be a blessing – to allow Christ to live and act more fully through us in our daily lives
- Immediately following the blessing, therefore, the deacon (or priest) proclaims the dismissal, which always begins with the word GO! – just as the risen Christ sent his disciples, so He sends us! (Mt 28:20)
  - In fact, our whole celebration of worship gets its name Mass from the dismissal (Ite missa est – Go, you are dismissed), but we have not gathered simply to be sent; it is only after we have encountered Christ alive among us and have been nourished by Him (through Word and Sacrament) that we are blessed and sent to live what we have just celebrated, to fulfill God’s will in our daily lives (CCC, 1332)
  - The fruit of our Eucharistic celebration – communion with God – necessarily leads to the dismissal, for the more we are drawn into the life of God, the more passionately we must GO! This is what God does – God unceasingly seeks out the lost, the hurting, the poor, and the marginalized; so, we are sent!
    - In our daily living, God wants us all to be people of the Mass – people who know they have been sent by God; God wants us to bring His saving love, His light, into the lives of those who live in darkness; just as God reveals Himself to us at Mass, where we rightly give Him worship, God desires also that we look for Him in the world and worship Him through our lives
- Like the magi who encountered the living God revealed in Jesus, we, too, are blessed today to encounter Jesus, the living God, who not only reveals Himself, but gives Himself completely to us. May the brightness of Christ kindled within us through our worship, dispel the darkness of our world and lead others to Him!