

TOGETHER

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MESSAGES FROM ARCHBISHOP JACKELS



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ARCHBISHOP JACKELS 2022 CATHOLIC SCHOOLS WEEK MESSAGE

The Archdiocese of Dubuque is blessed with many Catholic schools that help parents teach the Catholic Faith to their children, forming them as followers of Jesus.

A Catholic school doesn't take the place of parents in this important role; indeed, if faith is not talked about or practiced at home, the mission of a Catholic school is frustrated.

Our aim is to keep the Catholic identity of our schools strong, and to make them all affordable, so that families would and could send their school-age children there.

With regard to that aim, I am grateful to parishioners, parents, clergy, school staff and teachers, and STO contributors for all they do.

That said, when it comes to knowing, loving and serving Jesus, we can't ever say that we've arrived, not we or our Catholic schools. So... Up! Always higher! More is better!

Michael O. Jackels
Archbishop of Dubuque



A Follower of Jesus in His Holy Catholic Church

This is the seventh entry in a document by Archbishop Michael Jackels titled, "A Follower of

Jesus In His Holy Catholic Church" which was published online in April of 2021.

WHAT IS THE WAY OF LIFE JESUS SHOWS HIS FOLLOWERS ? (Part 3, continued)

WORSHIP AT HOLY MASS

Of the seven Sacraments, the celebration of the Eucharist at Holy Mass, especially on Sunday, the Lord's Day, is important for the practice of our holy Catholic Faith.

Participation in Mass is the ordinary way we keep holy the Lord's Day; it is right and just, our duty and salvation to worship God at Sunday Mass.

Mass is called the summit of our Christian lives. We go to Mass to give praise and thanks to God, for everything from our life's breath to ketchup on our French Fries. We also ask God for what we and others need, again, everything from life's breath...

Mass is also called the source of our Christian lives. What we hear and say, give and receive prepares us to practice our faith outside of church, on Monday, where we live, and move, and have our being.

That's why, at the end of Mass, we're dismissed with the words: "Go! You are sent!" This isn't permission to leave, but a command to go and transform the world into the kingdom of God.

When we receive the Eucharist, our life in Christ is nourished, and we are sent out to give life and gladness to others, like Christ. Here's one way of understanding the link between our mission to transform the world and Holy Mass:

At the Last Supper, when Jesus gave us the priesthood and the Eucharist, he used wheat bread and grape wine.

Maybe Jesus had to use bread and wine because the law of Moses required it, but maybe he used them because they express the essence of his life, and ours.

Wheat is ground to make flour, which is baked into bread, becoming the staff of life. Grapes are crushed for their juice, which is made into wine, to bring us gladness.

It is the fulfillment of wheat and grapes to be ground and crushed. You might say that they live to give life and gladness to others.

That is also the fulfillment of Jesus. He said: No one takes my life from me. I lay it down freely. I live to give life and gladness to others. (John 10)

That's also the fulfillment of Christians. Consider this: **Jesus took up his cross to do for others what they couldn't do for themselves, to give life and gladness to others.**

Taking up our cross involves at least in part doing the same: serving, sacrificing to do for others what they can't do for themselves, to give them life and gladness. Any suffering involved in that comes from the loss of something as a result of sharing.

That's one way of understanding what Jesus said at the Last Supper: "Do this in memory of me."

Service, sacrifice, sharing, living to give life and gladness are essential practices of our Catholic religion, as much as going to Sunday Mass, confessing our sins to a priest, studying the Catechism, and eating fish sticks on Friday.

An elaborated catechism on the Holy Mass, titled The Fourth H, is available on the website for the Archdiocese of Dubuque. The title refers to "how to celebrate Holy Mass." The other three H's are: hospitality, hymns, and the homily.

CONFESS OUR SINS TO A PRIEST

As mentioned earlier, we are obliged to confess our sins to a priest at least once a year, if we're guilty of mortal sin.

About sin: We say that it's "sinful" to think, speak, or act in a way that is contrary to the law of God, especially the Ten Commandments, and even more the commandments to love God first and most, and to love your neighbor as yourself.

But we say we are "sinners" when we know we're guilty of sin, that is, blameworthy, knowing full well that the thought, word, or deed in question was indeed a sin against God, and we deliberately, freely chose to do it anyway.

It is called a venial sin when the bad thing that's actually done (a sin of commission), or the good thing that's not done (a sin of omission) is not so serious in and of itself, or when there were unavoidable limits to our knowledge or freedom. The word venial is from Latin, meaning pardonable.

Venial sin can be forgiven by confessing it to a priest, but also outside of Confession, for example: by saying what's called a perfect Act of Contrition, that is, our sorrow for sin is inspired more by love of God than by fear of Hell; by participating in Mass and worthily receiving Holy Communion; or by saying

prayers, by doing acts of self-denial, and by giving money to the poor.

It is called a mortal sin when the bad thing that's actually done, or the good thing that's not done, is serious in and of itself, and we're fully aware of that fact, and our choice to sin is fully ours, fully free. The word mortal is from Latin, meaning deadly; it is said to kill the life of Christ (grace) that we receive at Baptism.

Mortal sin is ordinarily only forgiven by confessing it to a priest, with sorrow, and planning to avoid that sin in the future. So, if we're guilty of mortal sin, we should run, not walk to the nearest priest for Confession.

In extraordinary circumstances, when it's not possible to confess to a priest, we can receive forgiveness for our mortal sins by saying a perfect Act of Contrition, with the intention to mention that sin in Confession to a priest as soon as that's possible.

Going to Confession is powerful to help us grow up, and to become holy, to be more like Jesus. Therefore, it's a good idea to go to Confession regularly, say, once a month. Here are some other reasons that the Sacrament of Confession is recommended to us:

1. Jesus gave priests authority to forgive sins in his name. (John 20:23) The priest is a minister of God's forgiveness, trying to imitate the love and mercy of Jesus.
2. The apostle James tells us we can find healing by confessing our sins. (James 5:16)
3. The absolution the priest speaks in Confession assures us that God has forgiven our sins; no need to worry if we were sorry enough, or if we confessed correctly.
4. Even if the priest in Confession doesn't say anything other than "I absolve you from your sins" there is still great benefit, just from examining our conscience, taking responsibility for our actions, doing penance (restorative justice), and telling our sins out loud.
5. The priest isn't allowed to tell anyone what we confessed, and so Confession is a safe place to tell our sins, and to receive spiritual counsel.
6. The priest has heard it all before, and is a sinner like us, so there's no need for us to be afraid or embarrassed.
7. Going to Confession reminds us that, no matter what sins we confess, or how often we sin, we are always loved by God with a love that we can neither earn nor lose.
8. Going to Confession makes the angels and saints rejoice. (Luke 15:7)
9. And though we might dread the thought of confessing our sins to a priest, most people feel great afterwards, like a heavy weight is lifted off our shoulders.

With regard to the examination of conscience mentioned above, the most widely practiced

way to help us acknowledge our sins is to ask ourselves if and how well we have obeyed the Ten Commandments (Exodus 20:2-17):

1. I am the Lord your God: you shall not have strange gods before me.
2. You shall not take the name of the Lord your God in vain.
3. Remember to keep holy the Lord's Day.
4. Honor your father and your mother.
5. You shall not kill.
6. You shall not commit adultery.
7. You shall not steal.
8. You shall not bear false witness against your neighbor.
9. You shall not covet your neighbor's wife.
10. You shall not covet your neighbor's goods.

Jesus said that he came to fulfill the Commandments, not to abolish them. (Matthew 5:17) One way he did that is by broadening or deepening our understanding of them. For example, murder is a sin, but so is hating someone; adultery is a sin, but so is lusting after someone. (Matthew 5:22, 28)

Another way he did that is by teaching that love of God and love of neighbor, even an enemy, especially an enemy, fulfill the Commandments. (Matthew 22:36-40) In fact, the first three Commandments are about proper love of God, and the last seven, right love of neighbor.

There is an examination of conscience on the website for the Archdiocese of Dubuque.

VOCATION

We also practice our holy Catholic Faith by learning and living God's plan for our life, our vocation.

All people have at least four vocations, or calls from God: (1) to go to Heaven, (2) to become holy by imitating Jesus, (3) to support the mission of the Church, and (4) to a state in life as a single or a married person, as a sister or a priest in the Archdiocese of Dubuque.

Of the four vocations, the last one, the call to a state in life, is the most important, because when we know, embrace, and live our state in life, that has a huge impact on our other calls: to mission (evangelization), to holiness (imitation of Christ), and to Heaven (our true home).

And that's because whatever we do is conditioned by our state in life; we do whatever as a single or married person, as a sister or a priest in the Archdiocese of Dubuque.

From all eternity, God has a plan for each person's state in life. Our responsibility is to learn God's plan, and then say "Yes" to it, and live it to the best of our ability.

The payoff is enjoying happiness and fulfillment, and then having the best chance of making the world a better place.

"[Jesus] summoned those whom he wanted and they came to him. He appointed twelve... that they might be with him and he might send them forth to preach." (Mark 3:13-14)

An elaborated catechism on vocation is available on the website for the Archdiocese of Dubuque.

STEWARDSHIP

Practicing stewardship is still another way of practicing our holy Catholic Faith. What does the Church teach about stewardship?

First, we don't own anything. Everything is on loan to us from God, and not just money, but also who we are, what we can do, and what we possess.

Second, all is entrusted to us by God to manage for God. The word manage comes from the Greek word for economy. And another word for that is stewardship: to manage or care for someone else's property according to the desire of the owner.

Third, the desire of the owner, God, is that we use what is entrusted to us to benefit ourselves, those who are dependent on us, the mission of the Church, and the poor.

Fourth, there is no uniform practice of stewardship; it will look different for each person depending on what God has entrusted to us, and on our personal circumstances.

Stewardship is practiced by freely, generously, even sacrificially sharing our time, talent and treasure, not compelled by the threat of punishment, or the promise of a reward.

That being said, people who practice stewardship will tell you that God always provides an abundance of what we are willing to share with others. Jesus taught that "the measure with which you measure will in return be measured out to you." (Luke 6:38)

So, if we're willing to share nothing, God will make sure we have an abundance of nothing. But if we share generously, then "a good measure, packed together, shaken down, and overflowing, will be poured into your lap." (Luke 6:38)

We're supposed to do something with what God entrusts to our management, our stewardship. If we do nothing, well, God may greet us with the words from Jesus' parable: you wicked and lazy servant. (Matthew 25:26)

Our time, talent, and treasure are like manure: if all you do is let it pile up, it will stink and draw flies, but if you spread it around, it produces abundant fruit.

We manage time, talent and treasure according to God's purpose, but also creation: making it prosper and grow using it, but not selfishly, or for sordid gain.

An elaborated catechism on stewardship is available www.dbqarch.org/stewardship-catechism.

This section will continue with the conclusion of this eight-part series. The entire series can be found online at www.dbqarch.org/foj-intro.