

SAINT MARY'S CATHOLIC CHURCH

VICTORIA, TEXAS



FOURTH SUNDAY OF EASTER

- GOOD SHEPHERD SUNDAY -

SUNDAY, MAY 3, 2020

CHAPTER III DIES ECCLESIAE

The Eucharistic Assembly: Heart of Sunday

The presence of the Risen Lord

31. "I am with you always, to the end of the age" (Mt 28:20). This promise of Christ never ceases to resound in the Church as the fertile secret of her life and the wellspring of her hope. As the day of Resurrection, Sunday is not only the remembrance of a past event: it is a celebration of the living presence of the Risen Lord in the midst of his own people.

For this presence to be properly proclaimed and lived, it is not enough that the disciples of Christ pray individually and commemorate the death and Resurrection of Christ inwardly, in the secrecy of their hearts. Those who have received the grace of baptism are not saved as individuals alone, but as members of the Mystical Body, having become part of the People of God.⁽³⁸⁾ It is important therefore that they come together to express fully the very identity of the Church, the ekklesia, the assembly called together by the Risen Lord who offered his life "to reunite the scattered children of God" (Jn 11:52). They have become "one" in Christ (cf. Gal 3:28) through the gift of the Spirit. This unity becomes visible when Christians gather together: it is then that they come to know vividly and to testify to the world that they are the people redeemed, drawn "from every tribe and language and people and nation" (Rev 5:9). The assembly of Christ's disciples embodies from age to age the image of the first Christian community which Luke gives as an example in the Acts of the Apostles, when he recounts that the first baptized believers "devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching and fellowship, to the breaking of bread and the prayers" (2:42).

The Eucharistic assembly

32. The Eucharist is not only a particularly intense expression of the reality of the Church's life, but also in a sense its "fountain-head".⁽³⁹⁾ The Eucharist feeds and forms the Church: "Because there is one bread, we who are many are one body, for we all partake of the one bread" (1 Cor 10:17). Because of this vital link with the sacrament of the Body and Blood of the Lord, the mystery of the Church is savored, proclaimed, and lived supremely in the Eucharist.⁽⁴⁰⁾

This ecclesial dimension intrinsic to the Eucharist is realized in every Eucharistic celebration. But it is expressed most especially on the day when the whole community comes together to commemorate the Lord's Resurrection. Significantly, the Catechism of the Catholic Church teaches that "the Sunday celebration of the Lord's Day and his Eucharist is at the heart of the Church's life".⁽⁴¹⁾

33. At Sunday Mass, Christians relive with particular intensity the experience of the Apostles on the evening of Easter when the Risen Lord appeared to them as they were gathered together (cf. Jn 20:19). In a sense, the People of God of all times were present in that small nucleus of disciples, the first fruits of the Church. Through their testimony, every generation of believers hears the greeting of Christ, rich with the messianic gift of peace, won by his blood and offered with his Spirit: "Peace be with you!" Christ's return among them "a week later" (Jn 20:26) can be seen as a radical prefiguring of the Christian community's practice of coming together every seven days, on "the Lord's Day" or Sunday, in order to profess faith in his Resurrection and to receive the blessing which he had promised: "Blessed are those who have not seen and yet believe" (Jn 20:29). This close connection between the appearance of the Risen Lord and the Eucharist is suggested in the Gospel of Luke in the story of the two disciples of Emmaus, whom Christ approached and led to understand the Scriptures and then sat with them at table. They recognized him when he "took the bread, said the blessing, broke it and gave it to them" (24:30). The gestures of Jesus in this account are his gestures at the Last Supper, with the clear allusion to the "breaking of bread", as the Eucharist was called by the first generation of Christians.

The Sunday Eucharist

34. It is true that, in itself, the Sunday Eucharist is no different from the Eucharist celebrated on other days, nor can it be separated from liturgical and sacramental life as a whole. By its very nature, the Eucharist is an epiphany of the Church;⁽⁴²⁾ and this is most powerfully expressed when the diocesan community gathers in prayer with its Pastor: "The Church appears with special clarity when the holy People of God, all of them, are actively and fully sharing in the same liturgical celebrations — especially when it is the same Eucharist — sharing one prayer at one altar, at which the Bishop is presiding, surrounded by his presbyters and his ministers".⁽⁴³⁾ This relationship with the Bishop and with the entire Church community is inherent in every Eucharistic celebration, even when the Bishop does not preside, regardless of the day of the week on which it is celebrated. The mention of the Bishop in the Eucharistic Prayer is the indication of this.

But because of its special solemnity and the obligatory presence of the community, and because it is celebrated "on the day when Christ conquered death and gave us a share in his immortal life",⁽⁴⁴⁾ the Sunday Eucharist expresses with greater emphasis its inherent ecclesial dimension. It becomes the paradigm for other Eucharistic celebrations. Each community, gathering all its members for the "breaking of the bread", becomes the place where the mystery of the Church is concretely made present. In celebrating the Eucharist, the community opens itself to communion with the universal Church,⁽⁴⁵⁾ imploring the Father to "remember the Church throughout the world" and make her grow in the unity of all the faithful with the Pope and with the Pastors of the particular Churches, until love is brought to perfection.

The day of the Church

35. Therefore, the dies Domini is also the dies Ecclesiae. This is why on the pastoral level the community aspect of the Sunday celebration should be particularly stressed. As I have noted elsewhere, among the many activities of a parish, "none is as vital or as community-forming as the Sunday celebration of the Lord's Day and his Eucharist".⁽⁴⁶⁾ Mindful of this, the Second Vatican Council recalled that efforts must be made to ensure that there is "within the parish, a lively sense of community, in the first place through the community celebration of Sunday Mass".⁽⁴⁷⁾ Subsequent liturgical directives made the same point, asking that on Sundays and holy days the Eucharistic celebrations held normally in other churches and chapels be coordinated with the celebration in the parish church, in order "to foster the sense of the Church community, which is nourished and expressed in a particular way by the community celebration on Sunday, whether around the Bishop, especially in the Cathedral, or in the parish assembly, in which the pastor represents the Bishop".⁽⁴⁸⁾

36. The Sunday assembly is the privileged place of unity: it is the setting for the celebration of the sacramentum unitatis which profoundly marks the Church as a people gathered "by" and "in" the unity of the Father, of the Son and of the Holy Spirit.⁽⁴⁹⁾ For Christian families, the Sunday assembly is one of the most outstanding expressions of their identity and their "ministry" as "domestic churches",⁽⁵⁰⁾ when parents share with their children at the one Table of the word and of the Bread of Life. We do well to recall in this regard that it is first of all the parents who must teach their children to participate in Sunday Mass; they are assisted in this by catechists, who are to see to it that initiation into the Mass is made a part of the formation imparted to the children entrusted to their care, explaining the important reasons behind the obligatory nature of the precept. When circumstances suggest it, the celebration of Masses for Children, in keeping with the provisions of the liturgical norms,⁽⁵¹⁾ can also help in this regard.

At Sunday Masses in parishes, insofar as parishes are "Eucharistic communities",⁽⁵²⁾ it is normal to find different groups, movements, associations and even the smaller religious communities present in the parish. This allows everyone to experience in common what they share most deeply, beyond the particular spiritual paths which, by discernment of Church authority,⁽⁵³⁾ legitimately distinguish them. This is why on Sunday, the day of gathering, small group Masses are not to be encouraged: it is not only a question of ensuring that parish assemblies are not without the necessary ministry of priests, but also of ensuring that the life and unity of the Church community are fully safeguarded and promoted.⁽⁵⁴⁾ Authorization of possible and clearly restricted exceptions to this general guideline will depend upon the wise discernment of the Pastors of the particular Churches, in view of special needs in the area of formation and pastoral care, and keeping in mind the good of individuals or groups — especially the benefits which such exceptions may bring to the entire Christian community.

A pilgrim people

37. As the Church journeys through time, the reference to Christ's Resurrection and the weekly recurrence of this solemn memorial help to remind us of the pilgrim and eschatological character of the People of God. Sunday after Sunday the Church moves towards the final "Lord's Day", that Sunday which knows no end. The expectation of Christ's coming is inscribed in the very mystery of the Church⁽⁵⁵⁾ and is evidenced in every Eucharistic celebration. But, with its specific remembrance of the glory of the Risen Christ, the Lord's Day recalls with greater intensity the future glory of his "return". This makes Sunday the day on which the Church, showing forth more clearly her identity as "Bride", anticipates in some sense the eschatological reality of the heavenly Jerusalem. Gathering her children into the Eucharistic assembly and teaching them to wait for the "divine Bridegroom", she engages in a kind of "exercise of desire",⁽⁵⁶⁾ receiving a foretaste of the joy of the new heavens and new earth, when the holy city, the new Jerusalem, will come down from God, "prepared as a bride adorned for her husband" (Rev 21:2).

The day of hope

38. Viewed in this way, Sunday is not only the day of faith, but is also the day of Christian hope. To share in "the Lord's Supper" is to anticipate the eschatological feast of the "marriage of the Lamb" (Rev 19:9). Celebrating this memorial of Christ, risen and ascended into heaven, the Christian community waits "in joyful hope for the coming of our Saviour, Jesus Christ".⁽⁵⁷⁾ Renewed and nourished by this intense weekly rhythm, Christian hope becomes the leaven and the light of human hope. This is why the Prayer of the Faithful responds not only to the needs of the particular Christian community but also to those of all humanity; and the Church, coming together for the Eucharistic celebration, shows to the world that she makes her own "the joys and hopes, the sorrows and anxieties of people today, especially of the poor and all those who suffer".⁽⁵⁸⁾ With the offering of the Sunday Eucharist, the Church crowns the witness which her children strive to offer every day of the week by proclaiming the Gospel and practicing charity in the world of work and in all the many tasks of life; thus she shows forth more plainly her identity "as a sacrament, or sign and instrument of intimate union with God and of the unity of the entire human race".⁽⁵⁹⁾

The table of the word

39. As in every Eucharistic celebration, the Risen Lord is encountered in the Sunday assembly at the twofold table of the word and of the Bread of Life. The table of the word offers the same understanding of the history of salvation and especially of the Paschal Mystery which the Risen Jesus himself gave to his disciples: it is Christ who speaks, present as he is in his word "when Sacred Scripture is read in the Church".⁽⁶⁰⁾ At the table of the Bread of Life, the Risen Lord becomes really, substantially and enduringly present through the memorial of his Passion and Resurrection, and the Bread of Life is offered as a pledge of future glory. The Second Vatican Council recalled that "the Liturgy of the Word and the Liturgy of the Eucharist are so closely joined together that they form a single act of worship".⁽⁶¹⁾ The Council also urged that "the table of the word of God be more lavishly prepared for the faithful, opening to them more abundantly the treasures of the Bible".⁽⁶²⁾ It then decreed that, in Masses of Sunday and holy days of obligation, the homily should not be omitted except for serious reasons.⁽⁶³⁾ These timely decrees were faithfully embodied in the liturgical reform, about which Paul VI wrote, commenting upon the richer offering of biblical readings on Sunday and holy days: "All this has been decreed so as to foster more and more in the faithful 'that hunger for hearing the word of the Lord' (Am 8:11) which, under the guidance of the Holy Spirit, spurs the People of the New Covenant on towards the perfect unity of the Church".⁽⁶⁴⁾

40. In considering the Sunday Eucharist more than thirty years after the Council, we need to assess how well the word of God is being proclaimed and how effectively the People of God have grown in knowledge and love of Sacred Scripture.⁽⁶⁵⁾ There are two aspects of this — that of celebration and that of personal appropriation — and they are very closely related. At the level of celebration, the fact that the Council made it possible to proclaim the word of God in the language of the community taking part in the celebration must awaken a new sense of responsibility towards the word, allowing "the distinctive character of the sacred text" to shine forth "even in the mode of reading or singing".⁽⁶⁶⁾ At the level of personal appropriation, the hearing of the word of God proclaimed must be well prepared in the souls of the faithful by an apt knowledge of Scripture and, where pastorally possible, by special initiatives designed to deepen understanding of the biblical readings, particularly those used on Sundays and holy days. If Christian individuals and families are not regularly drawing new life from the reading of the sacred text in a spirit of prayer and docility to the Church's interpretation,⁽⁶⁷⁾ then it is difficult for the liturgical proclamation of the word of God alone to produce the fruit we might expect. This is the value of initiatives in parish communities which bring together during the week those who take part in the Eucharist — priest, ministers and faithful⁽⁶⁸⁾ — in order to prepare the Sunday liturgy, reflecting beforehand upon the word of God which will be proclaimed. The objective sought here is that the entire celebration — praying, singing, listening, and not just the preaching — should express in some way the theme of the Sunday liturgy, so that all those taking part may be penetrated more powerfully by it. Clearly, much depends on those who exercise the ministry of the word. It is their duty to prepare the reflection on the word of the Lord by prayer and study of the sacred text, so that they may then express its contents faithfully and apply them to people's concerns and to their daily lives.

41. It should also be borne in mind that the liturgical proclamation of the word of God, especially in the Eucharistic assembly, is not so much a time for meditation and catechesis as a dialogue between God and his People, a dialogue in which the wonders of salvation are proclaimed and the demands of the Covenant are continually restated. On their part, the People of God are drawn to respond to this dialogue of love by giving thanks and praise, also by demonstrating their fidelity to the task of continual "conversion". The Sunday assembly commits us therefore to an inner renewal of our baptismal promises, which are in a sense implicit in the recitation of the Creed, and are an explicit part of the liturgy of the Easter Vigil and whenever Baptism is celebrated during Mass. In this context, the proclamation of the word in the Sunday Eucharistic celebration takes on the solemn tone found in the Old Testament at moments when the Covenant was renewed, when the Law was proclaimed and the community of Israel was called — like the People in the desert at the foot of Sinai (cf. Ex 19:7-8; 24:3,7) — to repeats its "yes", renewing its decision to be faithful to God and to obey his commandments. In speaking his word, God awaits our response: a response which Christ has already made for us with his "Amen" (cf. 2 Cor 1:20-22), and which echoes in us through the Holy Spirit so that what we hear may involve us at the deepest level.⁽⁶⁹⁾

The table of the Body of Christ

42. The table of the word leads naturally to the table of the Eucharistic Bread and prepares the community to live its many aspects, which in the Sunday Eucharist assume an especially solemn character. As the whole community gathers to celebrate "the Lord's Day", the Eucharist appears more clearly than on other days as the great "thanksgiving" in which the Spirit-filled Church turns to the Father, becoming one with Christ and speaking in the name of all humanity. The rhythm of the week prompts us to gather up in grateful memory the events of the days which have just passed, to review them in the light of God and to

thank him for his countless gifts, glorifying him "through Christ, with Christ and in Christ, in the unity of the Holy Spirit". The Christian community thus comes to a renewed awareness of the fact that all things were created through Christ (cf. Col 1:16; Jn 1:3), and that in Christ, who came in the form of a slave to take on and redeem our human condition, all things have been restored (cf. Eph 1:10), in order to be handed over to God the Father, from whom all things come to be and draw their life. Then, giving assent to the Eucharistic doxology with their "Amen", the People of God look in faith and hope towards the eschatological end, when Christ "will deliver the kingdom to God the Father ... so that God may be everything to everyone" (1 Cor 15:24, 28).

43. This "ascending" movement is inherent in every Eucharistic celebration and makes it a joyous event, overflowing with gratitude and hope. But it emerges particularly at Sunday Mass because of its special link with the commemoration of the Resurrection. By contrast, this "Eucharistic" rejoicing which "lifts up our hearts" is the fruit of God's "descending" movement towards us, which remains for ever etched in the essential sacrificial element of the Eucharist, the supreme expression and celebration of the mystery of the kenosis, the descent by which Christ "humbled himself, and became obedient unto death, even death on a Cross" (Phil 2:8).

The Mass in fact truly makes present the sacrifice of the Cross. Under the species of bread and wine, upon which has been invoked the outpouring of the Spirit who works with absolutely unique power in the words of consecration, Christ offers himself to the Father in the same act of sacrifice by which he offered himself on the Cross. "In this divine sacrifice which is accomplished in the Mass, the same Christ who offered himself once and for all in a bloody manner on the altar of the Cross is contained and is offered in an unbloody manner".⁽⁷⁰⁾ To his sacrifice Christ unites the sacrifice of the Church: "In the Eucharist the sacrifice of Christ becomes also the sacrifice of the members of his Body. The lives of the faithful, their praise, sufferings, prayer and work, are united with those of Christ and with his total offering, and so acquire a new value".⁽⁷¹⁾ The truth that the whole community shares in Christ's sacrifice is especially evident in the Sunday gathering, which makes it possible to bring to the altar the week that has passed, with all its human burdens.

Easter banquet and fraternal gathering

44. The communal character of the Eucharist emerges in a special way when it is seen as the Easter banquet, in which Christ himself becomes our nourishment. In fact, "for this purpose Christ entrusted to the Church this sacrifice: so that the faithful might share in it, both spiritually, in faith and charity, and sacramentally, in the banquet of Holy Communion. Sharing in the Lord's Supper is always communion with Christ, who offers himself for us in sacrifice to the Father".⁽⁷²⁾ This is why the Church recommends that the faithful receive communion when they take part in the Eucharist, provided that they are properly disposed and, if aware of grave sin, have received God's pardon in the Sacrament of Reconciliation,⁽⁷³⁾ in the spirit of what Saint Paul writes to the community at Corinth (cf. 1 Cor 11:27-32). Obviously, the invitation to Eucharistic communion is more insistent in the case of Mass on Sundays and holy days.

It is also important to be ever mindful that communion with Christ is deeply tied to communion with our brothers and sisters. The Sunday Eucharistic gathering is an experience of brotherhood, which the celebration should demonstrate clearly, while ever respecting the nature of the liturgical action. All this will be helped by gestures of welcome and by the tone of prayer, alert to the needs of all in the community. The sign of peace — in the Roman Rite significantly placed before Eucharistic communion — is a particularly expressive gesture which the faithful are invited to make as a manifestation of the People of God's acceptance of all that has been accomplished in the celebration⁽⁷⁴⁾ and of the commitment to mutual love which is made in sharing the one bread, with the demanding words of Christ in mind: "If you are offering your gift at the altar, and there remember that your brother has something against you, leave your gift there before the altar and go; first be reconciled with your brother, and then come and offer your gift" (Mt 5:23-24).

From Mass to "mission"

45. Receiving the Bread of Life, the disciples of Christ ready themselves to undertake with the strength of the Risen Lord and his Spirit the tasks which await them in their ordinary life. For the faithful who have understood the meaning of what they have done, the Eucharistic celebration does not stop at the church door. Like the first witnesses of the Resurrection, Christians who gather each Sunday to experience and proclaim the presence of the Risen Lord are called to evangelize and bear witness in their daily lives. Given this, the Prayer after Communion and the Concluding Rite — the Final Blessing and the Dismissal — need to be better valued and appreciated, so that all who have shared in the Eucharist may come to a deeper sense of the responsibility which is entrusted to them. Once the assembly disperses, Christ's disciples return to their everyday surroundings with the commitment to make their whole life a gift, a

spiritual sacrifice pleasing to God (cf. Rom 12:1). They feel indebted to their brothers and sisters because of what they have received in the celebration, not unlike the disciples of Emmaus who, once they had recognized the Risen Christ "in the breaking of the bread" (cf. Lk 24:30-32), felt the need to return immediately to share with their brothers and sisters the joy of meeting the Lord (cf. Lk 24:33-35).

The Sunday obligation

46. Since the Eucharist is the very heart of Sunday, it is clear why, from the earliest centuries, the Pastors of the Church have not ceased to remind the faithful of the need to take part in the liturgical assembly. "Leave everything on the Lord's Day", urges the third century text known as the Didascalia, "and run diligently to your assembly, because it is your praise of God. Otherwise, what excuse will they make to God, those who do not come together on the Lord's Day to hear the word of life and feed on the divine nourishment which lasts forever?".⁽⁷⁵⁾ The faithful have generally accepted this call of the Pastors with conviction of soul and, although there have been times and situations when this duty has not been perfectly met, one should never forget the genuine heroism of priests and faithful who have fulfilled this obligation even when faced with danger and the denial of religious freedom, as can be documented from the first centuries of Christianity up to our own time.

In his first Apology addressed to the Emperor Antoninus and the Senate, Saint Justin proudly described the Christian practice of the Sunday assembly, which gathered in one place Christians from both the city and the countryside.⁽⁷⁶⁾ When, during the persecution of Diocletian, their assemblies were banned with the greatest severity, many were courageous enough to defy the imperial decree and accepted death rather than miss the Sunday Eucharist. This was the case of the martyrs of Abitina, in Proconsular Africa, who replied to their accusers: "Without fear of any kind we have celebrated the Lord's Supper, because it cannot be missed; that is our law"; "We cannot live without the Lord's Supper". As she confessed her faith, one of the martyrs said: "Yes, I went to the assembly and I celebrated the Lord's Supper with my brothers and sisters, because I am a Christian".⁽⁷⁷⁾

47. Even if in the earliest times it was not judged necessary to be prescriptive, the Church has not ceased to confirm this obligation of conscience, which rises from the inner need felt so strongly by the Christians of the first centuries. It was only later, faced with the half-heartedness or negligence of some, that the Church had to make explicit the duty to attend Sunday Mass: more often than not, this was done in the form of exhortation, but at times the Church had to resort to specific canonical precepts. This was the case in a number of local Councils from the fourth century onwards (as at the Council of Elvira of 300, which speaks not of an obligation but of penalties after three absences)⁽⁷⁸⁾ and most especially from the sixth century onwards (as at the Council of Agde in 506).⁽⁷⁹⁾ These decrees of local Councils led to a universal practice, the obligatory character of which was taken as something quite normal.⁽⁸⁰⁾

The Code of Canon Law of 1917 for the first time gathered this tradition into a universal law.⁽⁸¹⁾ The present Code reiterates this, saying that "on Sundays and other holy days of obligation the faithful are bound to attend Mass".⁽⁸²⁾ This legislation has normally been understood as entailing a grave obligation: this is the teaching of the Catechism of the Catholic Church,⁽⁸³⁾ and it is easy to understand why if we keep in mind how vital Sunday is for the Christian life.

48. Today, as in the heroic times of the beginning, many who wish to live in accord with the demands of their faith are being faced with difficult situations in various parts of the world. They live in surroundings which are sometimes decidedly hostile and at other times — more frequently in fact — indifferent and unresponsive to the Gospel message. If believers are not to be overwhelmed, they must be able to count on the support of the Christian community. This is why they must be convinced that it is crucially important for the life of faith that they should come together with others on Sundays to celebrate the Passover of the Lord in the sacrament of the New Covenant. It is the special responsibility of the Bishops, therefore, "to ensure that Sunday is appreciated by all the faithful, kept holy and celebrated as truly 'the Lord's Day', on which the Church comes together to renew the remembrance of the Easter mystery in hearing the word of God, in offering the sacrifice of the Lord, in keeping the day holy by means of prayer, works of charity and abstention from work".⁽⁸⁴⁾

49. Because the faithful are obliged to attend Mass unless there is a grave impediment, Pastors have the corresponding duty to offer to everyone the real possibility of fulfilling the precept. The provisions of Church law move in this direction, as for example in the faculty granted to priests, with the prior authorization of the diocesan Bishop, to celebrate more than one Mass on Sundays and holy days,⁽⁸⁵⁾ the institution of evening Masses⁽⁸⁶⁾ and the provision which allows the obligation to be fulfilled from Saturday evening onwards, starting at the time of First Vespers of Sunday.⁽⁸⁷⁾ From a liturgical point of view, in fact, holy days begin with First Vespers.⁽⁸⁸⁾ Consequently, the liturgy of what is sometimes called the "Vigil

Mass" is in effect the "festive" Mass of Sunday, at which the celebrant is required to preach the homily and recite the Prayer of the Faithful.

Moreover, Pastors should remind the faithful that when they are away from home on Sundays they are to take care to attend Mass wherever they may be, enriching the local community with their personal witness. At the same time, these communities should show a warm sense of welcome to visiting brothers and sisters, especially in places which attract many tourists and pilgrims, for whom it will often be necessary to provide special religious assistance.⁽⁸⁹⁾

A joyful celebration in song

50. Given the nature of Sunday Mass and its importance in the lives of the faithful, it must be prepared with special care. In ways dictated by pastoral experience and local custom in keeping with liturgical norms, efforts must be made to ensure that the celebration has the festive character appropriate to the day commemorating the Lord's Resurrection. To this end, it is important to devote attention to the songs used by the assembly, since singing is a particularly apt way to express a joyful heart, accentuating the solemnity of the celebration and fostering the sense of a common faith and a shared love. Care must be taken to ensure the quality, both of the texts and of the melodies, so that what is proposed today as new and creative will conform to liturgical requirements and be worthy of the Church's tradition which, in the field of sacred music, boasts a priceless heritage.

A celebration involving all

51. There is a need too to ensure that all those present, children and adults, take an active interest, by encouraging their involvement at those points where the liturgy suggests and recommends it.⁽⁹⁰⁾ Of course, it falls only to those who exercise the priestly ministry to effect the Eucharistic Sacrifice and to offer it to God in the name of the whole people.⁽⁹¹⁾ This is the basis of the distinction, which is much more than a matter of discipline, between the task proper to the celebrant and that which belongs to deacons and the non-ordained faithful.⁽⁹²⁾ Yet the faithful must realize that, because of the common priesthood received in Baptism, "they participate in the offering of the Eucharist".⁽⁹³⁾ Although there is a distinction of roles, they still "offer to God the divine victim and themselves with him. Offering the sacrifice and receiving holy communion, they take part actively in the liturgy",⁽⁹⁴⁾ finding in it light and strength to live their baptismal priesthood and the witness of a holy life.

Other moments of the Christian Sunday

52. Sharing in the Eucharist is the heart of Sunday, but the duty to keep Sunday holy cannot be reduced to this. In fact, the Lord's Day is lived well if it is marked from beginning to end by grateful and active remembrance of God's saving work. This commits each of Christ's disciples to shape the other moments of the day — those outside the liturgical context: family life, social relationships, moments of relaxation — in such a way that the peace and joy of the Risen Lord will emerge in the ordinary events of life. For example, the relaxed gathering of parents and children can be an opportunity not only to listen to one another but also to share a few formative and more reflective moments. Even in lay life, when possible, why not make provision for special times of prayer — especially the solemn celebration of Vespers, for example — or moments of catechesis, which on the eve of Sunday or on Sunday afternoon might prepare for or complete the gift of the Eucharist in people's hearts?

This rather traditional way of keeping Sunday holy has perhaps become more difficult for many people; but the Church shows her faith in the strength of the Risen Lord and the power of the Holy Spirit by making it known that, today more than ever, she is unwilling to settle for minimalism and mediocrity at the level of faith. She wants to help Christians to do what is most correct and pleasing to the Lord. And despite the difficulties, there are positive and encouraging signs. In many parts of the Church, a new need for prayer in its many forms is being felt; and this is a gift of the Holy Spirit. There is also a rediscovery of ancient religious practices, such as pilgrimages; and often the faithful take advantage of Sunday rest to visit a Shrine where, with the whole family perhaps, they can spend time in a more intense experience of faith. These are moments of grace which must be fostered through evangelization and guided by genuine pastoral wisdom.

Sunday assemblies without a priest

53. There remains the problem of parishes which do not have the ministry of a priest for the celebration of the Sunday Eucharist. This is often the case in young Churches, where one priest has pastoral responsibility for faithful scattered over a vast area. However, emergency situations can also arise in countries of long-standing Christian tradition, where diminishing numbers of clergy make it impossible to guarantee the presence of a priest in every parish community. In situations where the Eucharist cannot be celebrated, the Church recommends that the Sunday assembly come together even without a priest,⁽⁹⁵⁾ in

keeping with the indications and directives of the Holy See which have been entrusted to the Episcopal Conferences for implementation.⁽⁹⁶⁾ Yet the objective must always remain the celebration of the Sacrifice of the Mass, the one way in which the Passover of the Lord becomes truly present, the only full realization of the Eucharistic assembly over which the priest presides in persona Christi, breaking the bread of the word and the Eucharist. At the pastoral level, therefore, everything has to be done to ensure that the Sacrifice of the Mass is made available as often as possible to the faithful who are regularly deprived of it, either by arranging the presence of a priest from time to time, or by taking every opportunity to organize a gathering in a central location accessible to scattered groups.

Radio and television

54. Finally, the faithful who, because of sickness, disability or some other serious cause, are prevented from taking part, should as best they can unite themselves with the celebration of Sunday Mass from afar, preferably by means of the readings and prayers for that day from the Missal, as well as through their desire for the Eucharist.⁽⁹⁷⁾ In many countries, radio and television make it possible to join in the Eucharistic celebration broadcast from some sacred place.⁽⁹⁸⁾ Clearly, this kind of broadcast does not in itself fulfill the Sunday obligation, which requires participation in the fraternal assembly gathered in one place, where Eucharistic communion can be received. But for those who cannot take part in the Eucharist and who are therefore excused from the obligation, radio and television are a precious help, especially if accompanied by the generous service of extraordinary ministers who bring the Eucharist to the sick, also bringing them the greeting and solidarity of the whole community. Sunday Mass thus produces rich fruits for these Christians too, and they are truly enabled to experience Sunday as "the Lord's Day" and "the Church's day".

(38) Cf. Second Vatican Ecumenical Council, Dogmatic Constitution on the Church Lumen Gentium, 9.

(39) Cf. John Paul II, Letter *Dominicae Cenae* (24 February 1980), 4: AAS 72 (1980), 120; Encyclical Letter *Dominum et Vivificantem* (18 May 1986), 62-64: AAS 78 (1986), 889-894.

(40) Cf. John Paul II, Apostolic Letter *Vicesimus Quintus Annus* (4 December 1988), 9: AAS 81 (1989), 905-906.

(41) No. 2177.

(42) Cf. John Paul II, Apostolic Letter *Vicesimus Quintus Annus* (4 December 1988), 9: AAS 81 (1989), 905-906.

(43) Second Vatican Ecumenical Council, Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy *Sacrosanctum Concilium*, 41; cf. Decree on the Pastoral Office of Bishops in the Church *Christus Dominus*, 15.

(44) These are the words of the Embolism, formulated in this or similar ways in some of the Eucharistic Prayers of the different languages. They stress powerfully the "Paschal" character of Sunday.

(45) Cf. Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith, Letter to the Bishops of the Catholic Church on Certain Aspects of the Church as Communion *Communio Communio Notio* (28 May 1992), 11-14: AAS 85 (1993), 844-847.

(46) Speech to the Third Group of the Bishops of the United States of America (17 March 1998), 4: *L'Osservatore Romano*, 18 March 1998, 4.

(47) Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy *Sacrosanctum Concilium*, 42.

(48) Sacred Congregation of Rites, Instruction on the Worship of the Eucharistic Mystery *Eucharisticum Mysterium* (25 May 1967), 26: AAS 59 (1967), 555.

(49) Cf. Saint Cyprian, *De Orat. Dom.* 23: PL 4, 553; *De Cath. Eccl. Unitate*, 7: CSEL 31, 215; Second Vatican Ecumenical Council, Dogmatic Constitution on the Church Lumen Gentium, 4; Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy *Sacrosanctum Concilium*, 26.

(50) Cf. John Paul II, Apostolic Exhortation *Familiaris Consortio* (22 November 1981), 57: 61: AAS 74 (1982), 151; 154.

(51) Cf. Sacred Congregation for Divine Worship, Directory for Masses with Children (1 November 1973): AAS 66 (1974), 30-46.

(52) Cf. Sacred Congregation of Rites, Instruction on the Worship of the Eucharistic Mystery *Eucharisticum Mysterium* (25 May 1967), 26: AAS 59 (1967), 555-556; Sacred Congregation for Bishops, Directory for the Pastoral Ministry of Bishops *Ecclesiae Imago* (22 February 1973), 86c: *Enchiridion Vaticanum* 4, 2071.

(53) Cf. John Paul II, Post-Synodal Apostolic Exhortation *Christifideles Laici* (30 December 1988), 30: AAS 81 (1989), 446-447.

(54) Cf. Sacred Congregation for Divine Worship, Instruction Masses for Particular Groups (15 May 1969), 10: AAS 61 (1969), 810.

(55) Cf. Second Vatican Ecumenical Council, Dogmatic Constitution on the Church Lumen Gentium, 48-51.

(56) "Haec est vita nostra, ut desiderando exerceamur": Saint Augustine, *In Prima Ioan. Tract.* 4, 6: SC 75, 232.

(57) Roman Missal, Embolism after the Lord's Prayer.

(58) Second Vatican Ecumenical Council, Pastoral Constitution on the Church in the Modern World *Gaudium et Spes*, 1.

(59) Second Vatican Ecumenical Council, Dogmatic Constitution on the Church Lumen Gentium, 1; cf. John Paul II, Encyclical Letter *Dominum et Vivificantem* (18 May 1986), 61-64: AAS 78 (1986), 888-894.

(60) Second Vatican Ecumenical Council, Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy *Sacrosanctum Concilium*, 7; cf. 33.

(61) *Ibid.*, 56; cf. *Ordo Lectionum Missae, Praenotanda*, No. 10.

(62) Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy *Sacrosanctum Concilium*, 51.

(63) Cf. *ibid.*, 52; Code of Canon Law, Canon 767, 2; Code of Canons of the Eastern Churches, Canon 614.

(64) Apostolic Constitution *Missale Romanum* (3 April 1969): AAS 61 (1969), 220.

(65) The Council's Constitution *Sacrosanctum Concilium* speaks of "suavis et vivus Sacrae Scripturae affectus" (No. 24).

(66) John Paul II, Letter *Dominicae Cenae* (24 February 1980), 10: AAS 72 (1980), 135.

(67) Cf. Second Vatican Ecumenical Council, Dogmatic Constitution on Divine Revelation *Dei Verbum*, 25.

(68) Cf. *Ordo Lectionum Missae, Praenotanda*, Chap. III.

(69) Cf. *Ordo Lectionum Missae, Praenotanda*, Chap. I, No. 6.

(70) Ecumenical Council of Trent, Session XXII, Doctrine and Canons on the Most Holy Sacrifice of the Mass, II: DS 1743; cf. Catechism of the Catholic Church, 1366.

(71) Catechism of the Catholic Church, 1368.

(72) Sacred Congregation of Rites, Instruction on the Worship of the Eucharistic Mystery *Eucharisticum Mysterium* (25 May 1967), 3b: AAS 59 (1967), 541; cf. Pius XII, Encyclical Letter *Mediator Dei* (20 November 1947), II: AAS 39 (1947), 564-566.

(73) Cf. Catechism of the Catholic Church, 1385; cf. also Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith, Letter to the Bishops of the Catholic Church concerning the Reception of Eucharistic Communion by Divorced and Remarried Faithful (14 September 1994): AAS 86 (1994), 974-979.

(74) Cf. Innocent I, Epist. 25, 1 to Decentius of Gubbio: PL 20, 553.

(75) II, 59, 2-3: ed. F. X. Funk, 1905, pp. 170-171.

(76) Cf. *Apologia* I, 67, 3-5: PG 6, 430.

(77) *Acta SS. Saturnini, Davi et aliorum plurimorum Martyrum in Africa*, 7, 9, 10: PL 8, 707, 709-710.

(78) Cf. Canon 21, *Mansi, Conc. II*, 9.

(79) Cf. Canon 47, *Mansi, Conc. VIII*, 332.

(80) Cf. the contrary proposition, condemned by Innocent XI in 1679, concerning the moral obligation to keep the feast-day holy: DS 2152.

(81) Canon 1248: "Festis de praecipuo diebus Missa audienda est"; Canon 1247, 1: "Dies festi sub praecipuo in universa Ecclesia sunt... omnes et singuli dies dominici".

(82) Code of Canon Law, Canon 1247; the Code of Canons of the Eastern Churches, Canon 881, 1, prescribes that "the Christian faithful are bound by the obligation to participate on Sundays and feast days in the Divine Liturgy or, according to the prescriptions or legitimate customs of their own Church sui iuris, in the celebration of the divine praises".

(83) No. 2181: "Those who deliberately fail in this obligation commit a grave sin".

(84) Sacred Congregation for Bishops, Directory for the Pastoral Ministry of Bishops *Ecclesiae Imago* (22 February 1973), 86a: *Enchiridion Vaticanum* 4, 2069.

(85) Cf. Code of Canon Law, Canon 905, 2.

(86) Cf. Pius XII, Apostolic Constitution *Christus Dominus* (6 January 1953): AAS 45 (1953), 15-24; *Motu Proprio Sacram Communionem* (19 March 1957): AAS 49 (1957), 177-178. Congregation of the Holy Office, Instruction on the Discipline concerning the Eucharist Fast (6 January 1953): AAS 45 (1953), 47-51.

(87) Cf. Code of Canon Law, Canon 1248, 1; Code of Canons of the Eastern Churches, Canon 881, 2.

(88) Cf. *Missale Romanum, Normae Universales de Anno Liturgico et de Calendario*, 3.

(89) Cf. Sacred Congregation of Bishops, Directory for the Pastoral Ministry of Bishops *Ecclesiae Imago* (22 February 1973), 86: *Enchiridion Vaticanum* 4, 2069-2073.

(90) Cf. Second Vatican Ecumenical Council, Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy *Sacrosanctum Concilium*, 14; 26; John Paul II, Apostolic Letter *Vicesimus Quintus Annus* (4 December 1988), 4, 6; 12: AAS 81 (1989), 900-901; 902; 909-910.

(91) Cf. Second Vatican Ecumenical Council, Dogmatic Constitution on the Church Lumen Gentium, 10.

(92) Cf. Interdicasterial Instruction on Certain Questions concerning the Collaboration of Lay Faithful in the Ministry of Priests *Ecclesiae de Mysterio* (15 August 1997), 6; 8: AAS 89 (1997), 869; 870-872.

(93) Second Vatican Ecumenical Council, Dogmatic Constitution on the Church Lumen Gentium, 10: "in oblationem Eucharistiae concurrunt".

(94) *Ibid.*, 11.

(95) Cf. Code of Canon Law, Canon 1248, 2.

(96) Cf. Sacred Congregation for Divine Worship, Directory for Sunday Celebrations in the Absence of a Priest *Christi Ecclesia* (2 June 1988): *Enchiridion Vaticanum* 11, 442-468; Interdicasterial Instruction on Certain Questions concerning the Collaboration of Lay Faithful in the Ministry of Priests *Ecclesiae de Mysterio* (15 August 1997): AAS 89 (1997), 852-877.

(97) Cf. Code of Canon Law, Canon 1248, 2; Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith, Letter *Sacerdotium Ministeriale* (6 August 1983), III: AAS 75 (1983), 1007.

(98) Cf. Pontifical Commission for Social Communications, Instruction *Communio et Progressio* (23 May 1971), 150-152; 157: AAS 63 (1971), 645-646; 647.

THIS WEEK AT ST. MARY'S

Saturday, May 2 Memorial of St. Athanasius

4:00 pm Vigil Mass* Mass Intention: Danny Innocenti †
Anna Bell Pace †

5:00 pm Confessions* in the church

Sunday, May 3 Fourth Sunday of Easter

8:00 am Sunday Mass* Mass Intention: Walter Stevens †
Don Kruppa †

10:30 am Sunday Mass* Mass Intention: People of the Parish

Monday, May 4 Monday of the Fourth Week of Easter

7am - 7pm Church Open for Individual and Private Prayer

12:05 pm Daily Mass* Mass Intention: Lea Lenz †

12:30 pm Confessions* in the church

5pm - 6pm Confessions* in the church

Tuesday, May 5 Tuesday of the Fourth Week of Easter

7am - 7pm Church Open for Individual and Private Prayer

12:05 pm Daily Mass* Mass Intention: Charles Moscatelli †

12:30 pm Confessions* in the church

5pm - 6pm Confessions* in the church

Wednesday, May 6 Wednesday of the Fourth Week of Easter

7am - 7pm Church Open for Individual and Private Prayer

12:05 pm Daily Mass* Mass Intention: Harvey Haas †

12:30 pm Confessions* in the church

5pm - 6pm Confessions* in the church

Thursday, May 7 Thursday of the Fourth Week of Easter

7am - 7pm Church Open for Individual and Private Prayer

12:05 pm Daily Mass* Mass Intention: Ernest G. Covarrubias †

12:30 pm Confessions* in the church

5pm - 6pm Confessions* in the church

Friday, May 8 Friday of the Fourth Week of Easter

7am - 7pm Church Open for Individual and Private Prayer

12:05 pm Daily Mass* Mass Intention: Edwin Orsak †

12:30 pm Confessions* in the church

5pm - 6pm Confessions* in the church

Saturday, May 9 Saturday of the Fourth Week of Easter

4:00 pm Vigil Mass* Mass Intention: George Tyng †
Charles & Ann Pesek †

5:00 pm Confessions* in the church

Sunday, May 10 Fifth Sunday of Easter (and Mother's Day)

8:00 am Sunday Mass* Mass Intention: Mother's Day Novena †

10:30 am Sunday Mass* Mass Intention: People of the Parish

† symbol indicates the deceased

- * Please wear a face mask when coming to Mass and confession.
- * See the back of this page for details and information about resuming the public celebration of the sacraments.
- * All Masses will continued to be live-streamed on Facebook.

THIRD SUNDAY OF EASTER

Regular Offertory Gifts from April 20-26

Contributions by mail...\$3,275.00
On-line giving.....\$2,085.00
Total.....\$5,360.00

*Amount needed weekly
to meet budget: \$8,085.00*

THANK YOU FOR SUPPORTING THE MISSION OF THE CHURCH

Contributions can be made
through our website:
stmvictoria.org

or by mail to:

P.O. Box 2448
Victoria, TX 77902

or dropped off in the secure
mailbox at the parish office

THE SANCTUARY CANDLE

in the church
burns this week for
**the Parishioners of
St. Mary's Church**
by Fr. Kristopher Fuchs

THE ADORATION CANDLES

in the chapel
burn this week
in memory of
Willie and Lydia Kuecke
by Fr. Kristopher Fuchs

THE CANDLE IN COMMEMORATION OF THE DECEASED

in the chapel
burns this week
in memory of
Joshua Flessner
by Fr. Kristopher Fuchs

Please contact the parish
office to sponsor these
candles.

St. Mary's will return to celebrating Mass with a congregation beginning May 1st

- People over the age of 65 are encouraged to continue participating from home.
- People with a with chronic lung disease, moderate to severe asthma, chronic heart disease, severe obesity, diabetes, chronic kidney disease undergoing dialysis, liver disease, or weakened immune system or have other underlying at-risk conditions, are encouraged to continue participating from home. All Masses will continue to be live-streamed on Facebook.
- Dispensation from Sunday obligation to attend Mass in person is extended through the entire month of May, especially with respect to people who may be considered physically well to attend, yet believe it best to stay at home.
- Parishioners should take their temperatures before coming to Mass and should not attend if exhibiting any signs of sickness.
- Only 25% of the church's capacity will be allowed to enter the church. If we reach this number at the Saturday 4pm Mass or the Sunday 8am Mass, you will be encouraged to attend another Mass. There are many options in the city. At the 10:30am Mass, the Activity Center will be set up for overflow.
- Parishioners attending Mass are asked to wear a face mask, bandana, scarf, or other covering for the mouth and nose while on church grounds.
- At this point, there will be **NO** Hospitality Ministers, Altar Servers, Extraordinary Ministers of Holy Communion, and Lectors.
- There will be a basket at the entrance of the church to place your offertory contribution when you enter or exit the building. A one time use handout with the music and readings for Mass will also be available.
- Certain pews will be marked as unavailable to sit in. Please sit towards the ends of the available pews and leave at least 6 feet of space in between people of different households.
- The priest will distribute Holy Communion to the congregation who will remain in the pews. It is encouraged that Holy Communion be received in the hand. If you would like to receive Holy Communion on the tongue, please contact Fr. Kristopher 573-4328 as soon as possible to make arrangements for this to happen.
- If you are not able to come to Mass, you may make arrangements with Fr. Kristopher to receive Holy Communion at another time. Please call him at 573-4328.