

From the Pastor—June 21, 2020

Spiritually Starving I know that missing Holy Mass during the Covid-pandemic has weighed heavily on many of you. I want to help relieve the spiritual starvation you may be feeling with taking a closer look at why we love Holy Communion as Catholics.

The Catechism of the Catholic Church in paragraph #1322 states that, "*The holy Eucharist completes Christian initiation. Those who have been raised to the dignity of the royal priesthood by Baptism and configured more deeply to Christ by Confirmation participate with the whole community in the Lord's own sacrifice by means of the Eucharist.*"

Did you know that, if you are a Catholic, you have passed through the rites of initiation? For many of us, this entering into the mysteries of Christ's life, death, and resurrection was handed to us by our parents, as they saw the beauty of being a follower of the Lord. Baptism is always and forever the gateway to the other sacraments. So, before one is married, they must notify their priest of the church and date of their baptism. Before I was ordained a priest, someone at St. Joseph Church in Beatrice looked in the baptismal register and saw that I was baptized on Day 13 of my young life. We receive Confirmation, in the ancient ordering, as our second sacrament. Practically, the sacrament of Holy Communion has switched places with Confirmation since about A.D. 1900. I think that the Catechism rightly emphasizes that the Eucharist helps us participate with the whole community in sharing the Lord's sacrifice. This is what we miss when unable to attend Mass; we might not be able to put our finger exactly on it, to define it, but we miss being with one another and being in the presence of his Body and Blood.

Next, the Catechism tells us that "*at the Last Supper, on the night he was betrayed, our Savior instituted the Eucharistic sacrifice of his Body and Blood. This he did in order to perpetuate the sacrifice of the cross throughout the ages until he should come again, and so to entrust to his beloved Spouse, the Church, a memorial of his death and resurrection: a sacrament of love, a sign of unity, a bond of charity, a Paschal banquet 'in which Christ is consumed, the mind is filled with grace, and a pledge of future glory is given to us.'*"

Isn't this wonderful? Jesus takes the most horrific of circumstances, i.e. his own suffering and death, and raises it to something that we do in memory of him until the end of the world as we know it. We might not think of it this way, but what would our faith be like if Jesus had not instituted the Eucharist? What would bind us, Christians of the 21st century, with Christians of the first century? I have baptized many children as a priest, and many of them will live on into the 22nd century of Christianity. What would their Christian lives be like in the 2100's if there were no memorial of Jesus' sacrifice?

We also see in this paragraph that the Church is a Spouse to Jesus Christ. Our Lord uses the imagery of a wedding in parables, with himself as the bridegroom. We

as members of the Church are vowed to the Lord through our Baptism, strengthened in faith through Confirmation, and renewed in love through receiving the Holy Eucharist.

I love the last part of the italicized paragraph, speaking of consuming, filling, and giving. Our Lord allows us to consume his Body and Blood, thereby filling our minds with grace. A person who receives Holy Communion with full knowledge and understanding knows Whom they have received. This is the grace which is given through the Sacred Host. The pledge of glory, forever in heaven, is made to us at Holy Communion—think of it: God pledges heaven to you and me! Just like we might pledge our time to help a friend, or pledge a donation to help our school fundraiser, God pledges heaven to us when we receive him.

I hope to continue these Catechism paragraphs and commentary into the future.

Current Catholic Events You might be interested to know that Pope Emeritus Benedict XVI, who turned 93 in April, has a brother who is also a priest. His first name is George (in English; Giorg in German). Monsignor George Ratzinger is 96 years old. Last week, it was revealed that the elder Ratzinger is declining in health. It was further revealed that Pope Emeritus Benedict spoke to Pope Francis, who encouraged him to go and be with his brother in Germany. So, for the first time since Benedict XVI abdicated the Chair of St. Peter, he left Italy and is now with his brother. Isn't this a cool story? Two elderly brother priests, and brothers by blood, able to spend time together in their hour of need.

Living Liturgically This month of June has great festivals of Catholic celebrations. Let me recommend your observance of them. Try to attend Mass on these days.

The Birth of John the Baptist Always observed on June 24, this day is in honor of who Jesus referred to as "no one greater than he has been born of woman."

Solemnity of Saints Peter and Paul On June 29 each year, we observe these two great apostles. Even though Paul was not of the original 12 chosen by the Lord, the Scriptures are clear that he was chosen by the Lord on the road to Damascus. These saints died in Rome, which established this city as the "headquarters" of our Christian faith from the first century to our own 21st century.

Collections Deferred The Holy Father Pope Francis has deferred the collections for the Holy Land and Peter's Pence to be held later this year. The Holy Land collection is usually on Good Friday; Peter's Pence is the Sunday nearest to June 29th. If you have already given, this is fine. But if you haven't given, be looking for more information on when the collections will be held.

Parish Council Election Deferred Our past elections for new St. Mary's Parish Council members have been held alongside of our fiscal year, July 1 – June 30. However, due to the extraordinary circumstances, the election will be deferred to December. We thank everyone on our Council for their willingness to serve.

God Bless You!!!

Father Grell