

CHAPLAIN'S BULLETIN MAY 29, 2022



Dear Folks,

This Sunday we celebrate Ascension Thursday (one of life's paradoxes). This is a celebration of Jesus going back to heaven (for which I'm sure He was glad) but also a transition to being without Jesus' visible presence. He will always be with us, but we have a sense of Him being absent.

The Mass is our central and most important prayer, so how could we not have an interest in praying the Mass well? The Second Vatican Council teaches us a great deal about how to pray the Mass well. Whenever we try to pray, we succeed. No one speaks too softly or clumsily for God to understand. However, there is such a thing as praying better, and that involves bringing more and more of ourselves to God, opening more and more of ourselves to God, and engaging more and more of ourselves (God is already doing His part perfectly).

To pray the Mass well, we need some understanding. "With zeal and patience, pastors of souls must promote the liturgical instruction of the faithful, and also their active participation in the liturgy both internally and externally, taking into account their age and condition, their way of life, and standard of religious culture. By so doing, pastors will be fulfilling one of the chief duties of a faithful dispenser of the mysteries of God; and in this matter they must lead their flock not only in word but also by example (Constitution on the Liturgy #19)."

"The Church, therefore, earnestly desires that Christ's faithful, when present at this mystery of faith, should not be there as strangers or silent spectators; on the contrary, through a good understanding of the rites and prayers they should take part in the sacred action conscious of what they are doing, with devotion and full collaboration. They should be instructed by God's word and be nourished at the table of the Lord's body; they should give thanks to God; by offering the Immaculate Victim, not only through the hands of the priest, but also with him, they should learn also to offer themselves; through Christ the Mediator, they should be drawn day by day into ever more perfect union with God and with each other, so that finally God may be all in all (Constitution on the Liturgy #48)."

We need to respond internally. "For besides intimately linking them to His life and His mission, He [Jesus] also gives them a sharing in His priestly function of offering spiritual worship for the glory of God and the salvation of men. For this reason the laity, dedicated to Christ and anointed by the Holy Spirit, are marvelously called and wonderfully prepared so that ever more abundant fruits of the Spirit may be produced in them. For all their works, prayers and apostolic endeavors, their ordinary married and family life, their daily occupations, their physical and mental relaxation, if carried out in the Spirit, and even the hardships of life, if patiently borne—all these become "spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ". Together with the offering of the Lord's body, they are most fittingly offered in the celebration of the Eucharist. Thus, as those everywhere who adore in holy activity, the laity consecrate the world itself to God (Constitution on the Church #34)."

We need to respond externally. "To promote active participation, the people should be encouraged to take part by means of acclamations, responses, psalms, antiphons, and songs, as well as by actions, gestures, and bodily attitudes. And at the proper times all should observe a reverent silence (Constitution on the Liturgy #30). So, as we prepare for Mass, we recollect what we have done with whatever God has given us to work with: our 168 hours this week, our material resources, our abilities, our energy (such as it is), and our opportunities. We place it on the altar with the bread and wine (fruit of the earth and work of human hands), so that it may be consecrated. In prayer we participate in offering the One Sacrifice to the Father. In the Mass we are made more perfectly into the Body of Christ (1 Corinthians 12, Romans 12, and Ephesians 2:15-23), and this is a body offered as gift to the Father. As it says in the third Eucharistic prayer, "May he make of us an eternal offering to you...". We seek to respond to Him with

our whole selves, so that we may be completely His.

Blessings,
Fr. Jim