



From the Pastor  
13<sup>th</sup> Sunday in  
Ordinary Time - A  
July 2, 2023

**THE IMPORTANCE OF SACRED LITURGY.** Our next reflection on Pope Francis' 2022 Apostolic Letter, 'Desiderio Desideravi,' Latin for Jesus' pre-Last Supper words: "I have earnestly

desired [to eat this Passover with you before I suffer.]" [Luke 22:15] considers the Liturgy as **THE** place to encounter Christ. 'Desiderio Desideravi' [DD] dovetails so perfectly with our years-long series on the **2022-2025 National Eucharistic Revival**: this is **Part #31** of that ongoing reflection on the Eucharist.

**WE ENCOUNTER CHRIST IN THE LITURGY.** We base our Faith on far more than the Gospels, which tell of the Apostles' experience of the earthly Jesus and the Risen Lord before His Ascension, and the writings of the Apostles or biblical Letters of Saints Peter and Paul, James and Jude. We have Christ's Real Presence in our midst in the Gift of the Eucharist! For Christ's Incarnation, His becoming flesh in the womb of the Virgin who gave birth to Him, was **NOT** an event that ended upon His Ascension. Christ **REMAINS** present **TO** us - **FOR** us - and **IN** us - through the Eucharist! For as Jesus assured us at His Ascension: "Behold, I am with you always, until the end of the age." [Matthew 28:20b]

Christ fulfills His promise to be our Emmanuel, our 'God-with-us', in many ways. He is present in the poor and needy; those who gather in His holy Name; those sacramentally married; and the Ordained. We hear His voice in the sacred Scriptures and, above all, we eat His Body and drink His Blood in the Eucharist. The question is: are we as present to Christ as He is to us?

As the Holy Father puts it: do we say to ourselves: "I am Nicodemus, the Samaritan woman at the well, the man possessed by demons at Capernaum, the paralytic in the house of Peter, the sinful woman pardoned, the woman afflicted by hemorrhages, the daughter of Jairus, the blind man of Jericho, Zacchaeus, Lazarus, the thief and Peter both pardoned?" [DD. #11] For now, through the Sacraments, especially Eucharist, Christ enlightens and enriches, heals and restores, comforts and consoles, forgives and reconciles us - and raises us to new life!

**THE WATER OF BAPTISM.** To help us better understand the significance of the Sacraments and their symbols or signs, the Pope cites the prayer used to consecrate water for Baptisms at the Easter Vigil; it may also be used at other times. It summarizes the main ways God used water from the world's creation until its recreation through His Son's Passion, Death and Resurrection. Here are the five main ways which show that God had Baptism in mind, even as He created the essential, great gift of water!

\* Scripture says: "In the beginning ... the earth was without form or shape, with darkness over the abyss and a mighty wind sweeping over the waters." [Genesis 1:1a-2] The Hebrew word for 'mighty wind' - 'ruach' - also means 'Spirit' - which is why, on Pentecost, before the Holy Spirit appeared as tongues of flame, "there came from the sky a noise like a strong driving wind." [Acts 2:2] Thus starts God's intimate presence in water!

\* To wash the world of sin and restore Noah and his family - and, in time, all the baptized - to grace, God flooded the earth with water. As our first Pope explained, "... God patiently waited in the days of Noah during the building of the ark, in which a few persons, eight in all, were saved through water. This prefigured baptism, which saves you now." [1 Peter 3:20-21a]

\* God controlled the Red Sea waters, causing them to separate, freeing His People from slavery and certain death, and leading them to freedom.

No wonder this event, from the Book of Exodus, **MUST** be proclaimed at the Easter Vigil Mass.

\* The waters of the Jordan were sanctified by Christ, who, though sinless, chose to perform a repentant act by being Baptized by John the Baptist, raising water to a sacramental. He also commanded us: "... make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the holy Spirit." [Matthew 28:19]

\* As a fitting crescendo, God blended water and Blood as it flowed from His Son's Sacred Heart as He slept in death on the Cross. This 'crowns' the 'regal reality' of those who become one with Christ through Baptism, and makes us, the Church, the Bride of Christ the Bridegroom, as we will see in next week's article. So, stay tuned!

In Christ,

*Father Mark*

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