

Homily: Nov 26-27, 2016

- First Commandment
 - Is God the center of my life; is he the first thing I think about in the morning and the last thing at night
 - Do I structure my life to ensure all of my actions give God praise and glory
 - Do I understand that like any relationship, I have to work at my relationship with God; do I truly seek to grow in my knowledge of him; do I study the Church's teachings, especially the Catechism; do I understand and read Scripture as what it is – the Word of God spoken to me
 - How is my prayer life; do I pray twice a day – morning and evening – like the Church asks us to; do I read scripture every day realizing that it is the word of God spoken to me as His friend
 - Have I substituted anything for God: my job, drugs, alcohol, pornography, friends, the internet, cell phone/tablet, social life; sports – would I skip Sunday Mass to go to a football game or a child's soccer match
 - Do I see my faith as both a gift **and** the key to salvation
 - Do I pursue a **personal relationship** with Jesus through His Church and its teachings

- Second Commandment
 - Do I take the Lord's name in vain as a habit; I am conscious I am doing it
 - Do I understand the true holiness of God's name
 - Do I truly understand what it means to adore God and what kind of relationship that calls me to enter into, to literally let him "breath His grace into me" through the Sacraments and my prayer life
 - Do I keep God's name holy not only in speech but also in action – declining to gossip, correcting someone who constantly takes his name in vain, serving Him and others so that His name can be seen in action

- Do my actions in Church, especially at Mass, reflect the understanding that I am in the presence of God himself; do I genuflect or make a profound bow when I come or do I make a lazy gesture instead

- Third Commandment
 - Do I understand Mass is much, much more than a requirement; it is an invitation from Jesus Christ Himself to spend time with Him
 - Do I dress appropriately for Mass, i.e. does it reflect the knowledge that I am in the presence of Jesus Christ, true God and true Man, and if I am in the presence of Jesus, then I am also in the presence of the Father and the Holy Spirit
 - Or, I am satisfied to dress like I'm going to the gym, or lounge around the house or work in the yard; do I take the concept of "casual" to an unacceptable or brazen extreme
 - Do I properly prepare for Mass; do I examine the readings before I come, maybe even study them; do I come 10 minutes or so before Mass to calm myself down and realize where I am
 - Do I understand that the Mass is a celebration of the assembly that requires my full, conscious and active participation, especially through singing and responding in the prayers of the Mass at the appropriate times
 - Do I do my best to pay attention at Mass, or do I automatically "zone out" and let my mind wander; do I read the bulletin during Mass or the homily; do I say the Rosary instead of paying attention to the Mass
 - Do I truly understand the nature of the Mass, especially Eucharist; do I understand that the Mass and Eucharist is, as the Catechism says, "the source and summit of my Catholic faith"; have I made any attempt to study the Mass and try to understand its constituent parts; as much as any Catholic can, do I really understand the Eucharist – what it is, especially its three-fold sacrificial nature – the Last Supper, Calvary and the Heavenly banquet; do I grasp the role Eucharist – in fact all the sacraments – play in living out my Faith; do I give proper thanks to the

Lord for the unsurpassable gift of both the Mass and especially Eucharist after receiving Communion

- Do I understand that if I attend Mass as just a requirement or with no intentions of worshipping God or making use of His graces, I receive little to no benefit from coming to Mass and virtually no grace
- If I have young children and they are rambunctious, do I avail myself of the cry room, especially after several episodes, to allow them to calm down
- Am I in the proper spiritual condition to receive Eucharist or is it something I do without much thought; do I understand to receive Eucharist I must be in a state of Sanctifying Grace and if I receive Eucharist in a state of mortal sin, I have committed a far worst mortal sin
- When I receive communion, am I truly reverent, either genuflecting or making a profound bow one person before it is my turn; if I receive in my hand, do I make a throne with my hands to welcome King Jesus or are my actions sloppy and irreverent; does my disposition reflect my understanding of Eucharist, or are my actions lackadaisical reflecting little or no thought about what I am receiving
- Do I understand that by leaving Mass early, I am leaving the presence of the God of mercy and love, the God who made and fashioned me, and substituting some human activity in its place, something infinitely less valuable; do I understand that by leaving early I am telling God I only have some much time for Him and no more; do I understand the consequences of doing this, especially if it has become a habit
- Do I make frequent, i.e. monthly, use of the Sacrament of Reconciliation in preparation for receiving Eucharist; do I make an act of contrition during my prep time before Mass to ensure all venial sins are forgiven by the reception of Eucharist

- I could go on, but you get the picture. This is the bottom line: Christ is calling each one of us to an ever deeper relationship with Him through our Catholic faith. He has given us all the graces, aids and tools to build, grow and maintain that relationship. His most precious gift to us are the 7 Sacraments by which he makes us partakers of His grace – His very life within us. Chief among these is the Mass, and most especially Eucharist. Let us vow this Advent to heed His call to a deeper relationship with Him by embracing our Catholic Faith through study, prayer, reflection and frequent attendance at Mass and reception of the Eucharist. And, let us begin this journey by joining the psalmist and say “let us go rejoicing to the House of the Lord”.