

4 Minute Teaching – 1st Sunday of Lent 2018

As Lent begins, we continue our tradition of having four minute teachings before Mass. Some years the topics are varied throughout Lent; this year, I thought I would do a series on how to pray the parts of the Mass.

In a homily a few weeks ago, I mentioned that Mass is not boring. Mass is the highest form of prayer: it is the re-presentation of the Son to the Father. It is one and the same Sacrifice that Jesus made of Himself, over two thousand years ago, on the Cross. Not that Jesus is sacrificed again and again, but His once for all Sacrifice on the Cross is made present to us here and applied to us. The Mass is the greatest gift that Jesus ever gave to us...because it is the gift of Himself—really, truly, wholly, substantially present in the Holy Eucharist—He gives Himself to us as Food, that we may be united to Him in a way more intimate than any other. We are never so close to God on this earth as when we have just received Him in Holy Communion. Contact with God is not boring. The very purpose of our existence is to know Him and love Him. If we find ourselves bored at Mass, we either don't understand what we are participating in—in which case we need to learn—or we aren't making enough of an effort to participate.

If the issue is that you don't understand what is going on at Holy Mass—what it is, why we do what we do, what the symbolism of the various prayers and gestures mean—you need to study. There are plenty of books, CD's, podcasts, and television shows available. There is no excuse not to go deeper in your understanding of the Mass. There is a wealth of information, all of it is easily accessible. If you need some suggestions on what to read or listen to, email me. My email is frcw@smqoc.com. Don't assume you already know everything about the Mass...even if you've been to 12 years of Catholic school, there is always more to learn.

What I want to do in these four minute teachings this year, then, is not to talk about the Mass and its parts—that's your homework—rather I'd like to talk about what you can do to enter into the Mass—in other words, how you can make Mass a more prayerful experience.

The first point is to prepare yourself to participate at Mass. Don't just run in the door at the last minute...prepare yourself—whether at home, in the car on the way over, or when you get here. Take a moment to call to mind what you are about to do: you are coming to Church to adore the living God, to give Him thanks for all the blessings that He has given to you, to pray for your family, friends, and loved ones, to offer yourself to Him, to hear Him speak to you, and to be united with Him in Holy Communion.

Quiet your mind before Mass. Think about God. Thank Him for the blessings of the past week. Ask Him for mercy for those times when you know that you fell short. Lift up to Him those for whom you want to pray. Come to Mass with a specific intention or several intentions. Tell God that you are going to participate at this Mass for those intentions, offer your reception of Holy Communion for those intentions. Offer yourself at that Mass, in union with the Sacrifice of Jesus, for those intentions. We are called to imitate Christ and offer ourselves along with Him.

The Priest also prepares ahead of time to offer Mass. Each Mass is offered for a particular intention, or group of intentions. You can see in the Luminary the intentions for which a particular Mass is being offered. If you would like a Mass offered for a loved one, you can call the office and request a Mass intention. The Priest prayerfully makes an intention before Mass to offer that Holy Mass for the people and intentions that that have been requested...that is one of the things in the binder that you see us use at Mass—it lets Father Louis and me know for what intentions we are to offer that Mass. Having the Mass offered for someone is very

powerful; again, it is the very offering the Son made of Himself to the Father on the Cross applied to that person, or those intentions. The Self-offering of the Eternal Son of God to the Father is of infinite value. When you offer your Mass and Communion for someone, you share the spiritual benefits that you receive from your participation at Mass and reception of Communion with that person.

To summarize: prepare yourself ahead of time to pray at Mass. Formulate your intentions as you come to Church. Think of all the blessings for which you owe God thanks, recall the reasons for which you need to seek His mercy, call to mind those people who are in need of your prayers. Put yourself into a prayerful frame of mind on the way here. When Mass begins, your thoughts will already be recollected and focused.

We'll continue this series next week. May God help you to pray at this Mass with attention and devotion; may you receive Our Lord in Holy Communion with reverence and love. May you be open to all that God wants to do in your soul at this Mass. God bless you!