

TOGETHER

a monthly bulletin insert from the archdiocese



ARCHDIOCESE
of DUBUQUE

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SYNOD REPORT: INSTALLMENT 4 OF 5

Markers of Parish Vitality Identified by the Survey

There was enough agreement on the most important markers of parish vitality, by the survey respondents from among laity, religious and clergy, to call it a win.

The top markers of parish vitality were identified as having Mass in the parish every weekend, a sense of belonging, and faith formation programming.

Other markers that received strong support are good preaching, financial stability, service of others, and the practice of stewardship.

The survey results line up with our 4 archdiocesan ministry priorities: enhance Sunday Mass, strengthen faith formation, teach stewardship, and promote vocation.

They also endorse what the Vatican says are the 3 essential activities of a parish: serve the poor, learn and teach the Gospel, prayer and worship.

As there is strong agreement about those markers, indicating that the Catholic faithful are of one mind about parish vitality, and so we can/should own the survey results.

And as a consequence of that, we know where we need to up our game as individual parishioners, and as parish communities.

There's also a need to do pastoral planning at both the local and archdiocesan level to ensure the best pastoral care for Catholics in the Archdiocese of Dubuque.

Pastoral planning may (or may not) include closing some parishes or churches. If there are closings, it would be done in dialogue with parish leadership.

It mightn't necessarily or only be geography, numbers, financial health, condition of buildings, or even the regular availability of a priest that decides a parish's future.

That said, a parish needs enough money to pay the bills, and enough active people for an appropriate sense of community, and to carry out ministry roles.

A key determinant of a parish's viability will be its vitality, whether or not there's anything going on in a parish and its church between Sundays.

The entire Synod Report is available on the archdiocesan website at www.dbqarch.org/synod-report.

MESSAGES FROM ARCHBISHOP JACKELS



ARCHBISHOP REFLECTS ON HOW TO GET MORE OUT OF SUNDAY MASS

Introduction

Pope Francis, *Desiderio Desideravi*, no. 31 - "How can we grow in our capacity to live in full the liturgical action? How do we let ourselves be amazed at what happens in the celebration under our very eyes? We are in need of a serious and dynamic liturgical formation."

Fr. Thomas Reese, *Eucharist: Sacrament of Unity and Source of Division*, 5 July 2022, in response to the above-referenced document - "Francis, we need another letter, one that helps the average Catholic understand and participate in the Eucharist."

Will this help?

The duty to worship at Sunday Mass in church

We worship at Mass because Jesus said so: Do this in memory of me. And on Sunday, to honor Jesus' resurrection. And with others of the community of believers, in church,

because that's what's been done from the time of the Apostles onward.

As the priest says at Mass, it's right and just, our duty and salvation to worship God. Maybe we don't always feel like it, but imagine if parents didn't change their child's diaper because they didn't feel like doing that dirty duty.

Besides, Sunday Mass isn't about me and what I get out of it. The focus is instead on God, and giving what God deserves and what we owe to God: thanks and praise, love and obedience, bowing and bending the knee.

Our worship of God at Mass in church is joined to and modelled after the worship of God offered by the angels and saints in heaven: they never stopped singing Holy, Holy, Holy... giving glory, honor and thanks to God... falling to their knees (Revelation 4).

Like the angels and saints, at Mass we pray and sing, offer and receive, bow and kneel, and observe holy silence. All that shapes our minds and hearts so we can offer rational worship, which forms us in the true Christian spirit of humility and charity, mercy and service.

Full, conscious and active participation

Some people say that Mass is boring. But someone once said that if you're bored, then you're boring. Sorry, that's blunt, but it's true; we get out of the Mass what we put into it, namely, full, conscious, and active participation. That isn't easy.

For one reason, people normally choose words and gestures to express out loud and bodily the adoration, contrition, thanks, and supplication they feel in their minds and hearts. At Mass, on the other hand, we're instructed to say these words and do these gestures.

We're challenged therefore to learn what thoughts and feelings inspired the words and actions in the Mass book (Roman Missal), to understand their meaning and purpose, and then adapt our minds and hearts to them.

Again, we are to offer rational worship. And the Mass is meant to form us in the true Christian spirit. Neither of which can happen without understanding. That's why it's so significant that we can now pray at Mass in our native language, instead of Latin.

- "Where there is no understanding, there is only meaningless sound. The voice

without the word strikes the ear but does not build up the heart.” (St. Augustine, Third Sunday of Advent, Office of Readings, Second Reading)

- “[King Claudius, rising from prayer, says to himself] My words fly up; my thoughts remain below. Words without thought never to heaven go.” (Hamlet, Act 3, scene 3)

How important is understanding at Mass? If the language being used at Mass is unfamiliar to a concelebrating priest, such that he can't pronounce the words to be understood, he may not concelebrate (Redemptionis Sacramentum, 113).

The heart of our worship at Holy Mass

The heart of the rational worship we offer God at Sunday Mass is all about exchanging and changing; the Mass is sometimes even called the holy exchange of gifts.

The exchange of gifts starts with the readings proclaiming and the homily explaining God's gift of love to us, expressed in creating us, providing for our needs, saving us from hell, and accompanying us along the way to heaven.

God's love fills us with awe, inspiring reverence in us; that's the source of reverence and devotion, and not, as some folks insist, which side of the altar the priest stands on, or using Latin, or which Mass book the prayers are taken from.

In exchange, God waits for us to say, and I love you too. Just like in human relationships, our love for God starts as an interior sentiment, which is then normally voiced in words, and then oftentimes “proven” by some gift or action.

It can be said that our love in exchange for God's love is voiced when we say the Creed, and then “proven” in the offering we make at collection time. True, money pays the bills, but the true purpose is like the box of candy given to our beloved – it embodies our love for God.

If silver and gold we have none, or if it's a Mass without a collection, we still make an offering, in the form of a pledge of time spent in prayer or service of the poor or the parish.

What each person offers is then changed into the collective symbols of bread and wine, which are brought to the altar, placed on the paten and poured into the cup...

Which are changed into Jesus' Body and Blood when the priest invokes the Power of the Spirit and repeats the words of Jesus at the Last Supper; this is called the consecration.

At that moment, the sacrifice of Jesus on Calvary Hill is made present under the signs of bread and wine, which were carefully chosen for this purpose: wheat is ground to make life-giving food, and grapes are crushed to become

wine to make our hearts merry.

Wheat and grapes are happy to do it; it's their fulfillment, which is why bread and wine are fitting signs for Jesus' sacrifice, and why the Eucharist is fitting food for the soul, meant to change us into Jesus and, like him, to find fulfillment in living to give life and joy to others.

There is such a close connection between giving and receiving gifts that, at one time in the history of our Church, if people weren't able to receive the gift of Holy Communion, say, because they weren't yet baptized, they weren't supposed to make a gift at collection time.

Likewise, those people at Mass who didn't give a gift at collection time weren't supposed to receive the gift of the Eucharist at Communion time. That's not the practice anymore, but it illustrates well the holy exchange of gifts.

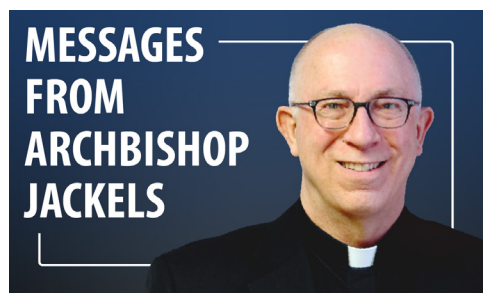
Sunday Mass in church linked to life on weekdays outside of church

The final exchange and change in the holy exchange of gifts is when, at the end of Mass, those who are changed by participation at Mass and receiving Holy Communion are sent out to change the world into the Kingdom of God.

Sunday Mass is closely linked to life outside of church on weekdays, or it is in danger of being a fake religious practice.

To help make that link, go to Mass with 1 thing to thank God for, 1 thing to ask God for, and to look/listen for 1 take-away to ponder and change into action for the good of the poor, the Church, the earth.

All the above is why enhancing the experience of the Sunday assembly for Holy Mass is so important and urgent, all for the glory of God and the salvation of souls.



ARCHDIOCESE PROMOTES EUCHARISTIC REVIVAL

At the August 2021 meeting of the Archdiocesan Pastoral Council and of the Priest Council there was a discussion regarding the USCCB project on Eucharistic revival. The members of these two Councils counseled against participating in the national project.

The reasons for that decision include the following: it implies that we, here, locally are incapable to renewing the faith and devotion of Catholics; it employs gimmickry; it excludes people who can't or won't travel to a national eucharistic congress; the USCCB initiative has a hefty price tag.

Since the counsel of those Councils was accepted, some people here heard about other dioceses participating in the USCCB Eucharistic revival, and asked what the Archdiocese of Dubuque is doing. Here are a few of our local initiatives:

1. As there is no Eucharist without a priest at the altar, the Catholic faithful are begged to offer “begging prayers” that God might provide more vocations to the priesthood in the Archdiocese of Dubuque.
2. The Worship Office is working to promote the devotion called Eucharistic Adoration, known officially as “Worship of the Eucharist Outside of Mass.” This prayer fuels our belief in the Real Presence, as well as our desire to go to Mass, receive Holy Communion, and imitate Jesus afterwards, especially by serving the poor.
3. The Worship Office is collaborating with the Office of Pastoral Planning and Leadership Development to train parishioners to lead prayers in parish churches on weekdays and Sundays when a priest is not available, such as: Sunday Celebration in the Absence of a Priest; Liturgy of the Hours, and Worship of the Eucharist Outside of Mass.
4. Everyone is encouraged to read the teaching documents written by Archbishop Jackels on the Sacrament of the Eucharist and on Holy Mass, which are available on the archdiocesan website. These documents touch upon various topics:
 - The duty to worship at Sunday Mass in church with others.
 - The expectation for full, active and conscious participation in the Mass.
 - Inviting and training ministers of hospitality, music, reading, serving, Eucharist.
 - Connecting Sunday Mass with mission, on weekdays, at home, school or work.

An unparalleled Eucharist revival in the Archdiocese of Dubuque would surely blossom if we were to pray for vocations to priesthood, participate in Eucharistic Adoration, help to lead prayers in church on weekdays and Sundays when a priest is not available, and read the teaching documents, and put them into practice too!