

SEPTEMBER 3 2024 DEACON MIKE WALSH

So, as Fr. Henk mentioned yesterday, we have begun our road trip, and we are so thankful to be here at the Manresa Spirituality Centre. I'd like to thank Fr. Henk and all of the Jesuits who have welcomed us in as the Loretta Abbey School undergoes a renovation. Not the chapel; the school around the chapel. So, the chapel will remain exactly as it is. Please keep it in your prayers during this renovation, so that we will be able to return there in the not-too-distant future.

You see, celebrating the Daily TV Mass has been one of the great joys of my life. In fact, I am approaching my eighth anniversary of being part of the Daily TV Mass team. When I started, I found a quote from Pope Francis that really struck me. Pope Francis said that the Eucharistic celebration is much more than a simple banquet; it is exactly the memorial of Jesus' Paschal Sacrifice. Here are the words that really caught me: he said it is the mystery at the center of our salvation.

In our first reading today from Paul, he said, "These things God has revealed to us through the Spirit, for the Spirit searches everything, even the depths of God." When I reflected on that, I thought, could there be anything greater than the Mass that helps us to see the depths of God in our lives? St. John Paul II said the Eucharist is truly a glimpse of Heaven appearing on Earth. It is a glorious ray of the heavenly Jerusalem, which pierces the clouds of our history and lights up our journey.

So, this Mass means a lot to us, and I know it does to everyone in the Daily TV Mass community. I wanted to share a story with you. This happened a few years ago. I was waiting for the beginning of Mass, and Fr. Dan Donovan was going to be the celebrant. He had arrived. Now, Fr. Dan, a longtime celebrant of the Daily TV Mass, is retired. He's doing well. But this was a few years back, and he came, so I went to see him before we began. As we often do, we simply talked.

I looked at him, and he had a slightly quizzical expression. He said to me, "You know, Mike, something happened to me today during the celebration of Mass." He had just been at the local parish where he celebrated the morning Mass before coming to us. He said, "That's never happened to me in 60 years of priesthood."

I said, "Well, what's that?" He replied, "Well, the congregation at that particular Mass did not offer the most important prayer response of the congregation." He said that it had never happened to him before. At that moment, there was a wave of terror in my life as he looked at me and asked, "Mike, do you know what the most important prayer of the people is in the Mass?" I was terrified to answer incorrectly.

So, when he asked me that, I thought, "Well, this would make a great homily!" And thus, what I would like to do, with your indulgences, over the next four weeks or so, is to be with you once a week to look at the various parts of the Mass and see if we can answer that question: What is the most important prayer of the people of the congregation?

So think about that. Maybe you'll come up with your own answer, and we'll explore it together. Now, it's different from the most important prayer of the Mass. The most important prayer of the Mass comes directly from the Gospels, and the priest, in the person of Jesus, will pray it. This is the way Mark tells this prayer, and it should be very familiar to you. It says, "While they were eating, He took a loaf of bread, and after blessing it, He broke it, gave it to them, and said, 'Take; this is My Body.' Then He took the cup, and after giving thanks, He gave it to them, and all of them drank from it. He said to them, 'This is My Blood of the Covenant, which is poured out for many.'"

That is the most important prayer of the Mass, but what is our most important prayer? Well, it got me thinking that the Mass is really the most sacred story that we celebrate as a community each and every day we come together. And story is so important. This is a quote from Sue Monk Kidd: “Stories have to be told, or they die, and when they die, we can’t remember who we are or why we’re here.”

If you look at the Mass, it's a story in four parts. The first part is the Introductory Rite; the second part is the Liturgy of the Word; the third part is the Liturgy of the Eucharist; and not to be forgotten, as part four, the Dismissal.

So, let me start today very quickly, and we’ll go through the Introductory Rite. We, of course, begin this sacred celebration the way we begin all of our sacred celebrations: In the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit. Amen.

And really, right there, we have the mystery in just that one prayer. The priest will greet us, and we will greet him back by saying this wonderful greeting, “The Lord be with your spirit.”

Today, not at every Mass, but today, there's really two forms of what’s called the Penitential Act—the longer form and the shorter form. Today, we had the Confiteor. This is an important moment. This is why I always encourage people to be on time for Mass, because in this prayer, the Penitential Act, we acknowledge that we are not perfect people. It's not that we're bad people; it's just that we're not perfect people and that we have sinned.

What is key about it—the key line to me—is when we say, “We have sinned through our fault, through our fault, through our most grievous fault.” Now, maybe one of the reasons I like that line is that it's one of the few I remember from the Latin: “Mea culpa, mea culpa, mea

maxima culpa.” In that one moment, we say, “Listen, Lord, we come to you to this great mystery, but we’re not perfect people.”

Then the next part is the Kyrie eleison, right? In that moment, we uncover one of the great themes of the Mass, where we ask for God’s mercy. Why? Because we are not perfect people. At some Masses—not all, certainly at Sundays outside of Advent and Lent, on our great solemnities, and major feasts—we pray the Gloria, and many times, we’ll sing it, right?

It is a beautiful prayer and a prayer in four parts itself. It begins with the song of the angels, which comes right from Luke’s Gospel: “Glory to God in the highest, and on Earth peace to people of goodwill.” Then, there’s this litany to God where we praise Him, we bless Him, we adore Him, we glorify Him, and we give thanks for His great glory. Part three is where we praise our Lord Jesus Christ, and again, we ask Him for mercy.

You remember this line? “You take away the sins of the world; have mercy on us.” Then it ends with this doxology, a word that’s used a lot when describing the Mass, and all that really means is it’s an expression of praise to God. In the closing doxology of this great prayer, we say it’s a prayer to the Trinity: “For You alone are the Holy One; You alone are the Lord; You alone are the Most High Jesus Christ, with the Holy Spirit, in the glory of God the Father.”

That’s part one. It’s very important. St. Paul reminds us today that we have received not the spirit of the world, but the Spirit that is from God, so that we may understand the gifts bestowed on us by God. The Mass is perhaps, if not, the greatest gift that has been bestowed on all of us by our God. Jesus broke the bread; He shared the cup and asked us to do this in remembrance of Him. That’s what we do today.

So, part one of the Mass prepares us to share in the mystery that is at the center of our salvation. When it's finished, we sit down, and when we sit down, we go to part two: the Liturgy of the Word. Here, we hear our story within the story. So next week, I'll be here to talk about that. But until then, this part of the Mass prepares us, as every part of the Mass does, to leave Mass in peace and to glorify the Lord by our life.

God bless.