

Good afternoon, and welcome to our December First Saturday Mass, hosted by Holy Family Parish, and sponsored by the World Apostolate of Fatima.

I would like to thank Deacon Roger for his generosity in allowing us to use Holy Family Church for these past 13 months to provide the environment to fulfill Our Lady's expressed wishes to Sr. Lucia for the First Saturdays of Reparation to her Immaculate Heart.

Also, I want to thank my brother priests: Fr. ... Fr. ... and Fr. ... who is still hearing confessions in the back. Our diocese ... and our nation ... are in the midst of a priest shortage, and it shows the great love of these priests for Our Lady in that they have given up part of their Saturday in order to assist with Confession and concelebrate the Mass. Please pray for an increase in vocations ... in Holy vocations ... to the priesthood; especially in the Diocese of Saginaw and in the United States.

Nearly 88 years ago ... almost exactly ... on December 10, 1925 - Our Lady and the child Jesus appeared to Sr. Lucia ... at the time, the last surviving visionary of Fatima. Both Our Lady and Our Lord asked Sr. Lucia to promote the First Saturdays of Reparation ... this being for five consecutive months on the first Saturday, to go to confession, to receive Holy Communion, to recite the Rosary, and to spend 15 minutes meditating on the fifteen mysteries of the Rosary with the intention of making reparation for the blasphemies and indifference shown to our Blessed Mother's Immaculate Heart.

And here we are, on the Memorial of St. Ambrose of Milan.

St. Ambrose was the bishop of Milan from 374 AD until his death in 397. Prior to that, he was the Imperial Governor of Northern Italy. In 374, when the previous bishop had died, Ambrose went to the cathedral where there was a conflict between the Arians - those who claimed Jesus wasn't really God, but was something more than a man - and Catholic Christians. Trying to calm the crowd, and keep the peace; a cry went up from the mob to make Ambrose the bishop. And it was thus that he was chosen ... and was consecrated bishop after first being baptized and ordained. You see, while he held the Catholic faith - he had not yet received the Sacrament of Baptism.

And it is appropriate that this Memorial should fall on First Saturday, since Ambrose's powerful Mariology - that is, his teachings on Our Lady - were in support of the dogma of her perpetual virginity as well as recognizing 1400 years before it was solemnly defined - her Immaculate Conception.

Very much ahead of his time theologically, his teaching on Mary as model of the Church and Mother of the Church was taken up and expounded in the last century at the Second Vatican Council in the chapter of *Lumen Gentium - The Dogmatic Constitution on the Church* - dedicated to Our Lady and the Church.

This year, Our Lady's feast day - the Solemnity of her Immaculate Conception - falls on Sunday (tomorrow). Because the Sundays of Advent are 'privileged' liturgically, they cannot be displaced by another feast. Because of this, Our Lady's feast is transferred to Monday. However, the obligatory nature of this holy day is *not* transferred. In order to honor Our Lady's Immaculate Conception, immediately following Mass, we will have the blessing and investiture of the Miraculous Medal. Those wishing to be invested in the Miraculous Medal should gather in the front few pews. And once the majority of people have dispersed, I will come to the front and we will proceed. Also, I'm sure that I'm preaching to the choir ... but this Mass is *not* a Sunday Mass. The Sunday obligation is met on Saturday evening following Vespers and on Sunday itself. Just in case someone didn't know that. If you want, there will be Mass at Holy Family this afternoon at 4:00 pm and tomorrow morning at 9:00 am.

As we continue this Holy Mass ... and as we all approach this altar to receive the Sacred Body and Blood, Soul and Divinity of Jesus Christ ... let us pray that through Our Lady's powerful intercession ... and the intercession of St. Ambrose, whose memorial we celebrate today ... we might be better disposed to receive the graces of this Eucharist for our salvation, and the salvation of the world.

May we be so blessed as to see and experience the Triumph of Our Lady's Immaculate Heart ... in our lives, in our time, and in the world.