



CHURCH OF SAINT MARY

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Dear Parish Family,

April 17, 2011

Today, Palm Sunday, begins Holy Week. We begin with a procession recalling Christ's triumphal entry into Jerusalem. But all too soon, we read the Gospel of His Passion. And then begins our week-long vigil leading up to Easter. Tuesday is the Chrism Mass at the Cathedral in Saginaw. There the bishop will consecrate the Holy Oils, which will be received at the Wednesday Masses. Also, at this Mass, all priests renew the promises of their ordination. Then Holy Thursday, and the Mass of the Lord's Supper - recalling the first Mass in the Upper Room. Then, Good Friday reminds us again of our Lord's crucifixion; and in silence we wait until Saturday Night: the Easter Vigil.

This week saw the funerals or deaths of three people ranging in age from 101 years-old to six years-old: Sila Anderson, Rosa Sanders, and Owen Summerfeld. Please pray for the repose of their souls and the consolation of their families. ETERNAL REST GRANT UNTO THEM, O LORD. AND LET PERPETUAL LIGHT SHINE UPON THEM. MAY THEY, THROUGH THE MERCY OF GOD, REST IN PEACE. AMEN.

As we move toward the close of the Lenten Season for 2011, I want to thank everyone who was instrumental in decorating, planning, cleaning, leading, participating, or in any way contributed to making this Lent more fruitful by their labors. Please keep each other and the whole parish in your prayers. Let us join Our Lord in this final walk to Calvary. God bless you!

Fr. David

Saintliness: The Measure of Christian Life

This past week, Benedict XVI spoke on the many saints who "with their faith, with their charity and with their lives, have been beacons for many generations, and are thus also for us".

"Often we are led to believe that sainthood is reserved to a few chosen ones", he said. Nonetheless, "saintliness, the fullness of Christian life, does not consist in the achievement of extraordinary feats, but in uniting oneself with Christ... in making His disposition ... His behavior ... our own. ... The II Vatican Council, in the Constitution of the Church, speaks clearly of the universal call to sainthood, affirming that no-one is excluded".

A holy life, the Pope continued, "is not principally the result of our efforts, as it is God ... who renders us holy, and it is the action of his Spirit which animates us from within, the same life of Christ resurrected which is communicated to us and which transforms us ... Saintliness is therefore ultimately rooted in baptismal grace, in being introduced to the paschal mystery of Christ, by which His Spirit, His resurrected life, is communicated to us. ... But God always respects our freedom and asks us to accept this gift and to live with the demands it brings, asks that we may allow ourselves to be transformed by the action of the Holy Spirit, conforming our will to the will of God".

"How can it be that our way of thinking and our actions become the thought and action of Christ?" asked the Pope. "Once again, the II Vatican Council offers us clear guidance; it tells us that Christian holiness is none other than charity, fully experienced". However, in order that charity might, "like a good seed, grow in the soul and there bear fruit, the faithful must listen gladly to the Word of God and, by its grace, carry out His will through their works, participate frequently in the sacraments, above all the Eucharist and the Holy Liturgy; they must constantly apply themselves in prayer, in the abnegation of their selves, in the active service of their brothers and in the exercise of every virtue. ... For this reason the true disciple of Christ is characterized by his charity both toward God and toward his neighbor". We are all called to open ourselves "to the action of the Holy Spirit, which transforms our life, so that we too may become [tiles] in the great mosaic of sainthood that God creates throughout history".

ORDINATION PROMISES

In the Rite of Ordination, the candidates make promises in preparation for receiving the Sacrament of Holy Orders. For many these promises might be seen as an impoverishment. They are asked to make a profession of faith, faith in something other than themselves and ephemeral notions of joy. They are asked to make an oath of fidelity, faithfulness to a greater and higher pursuit than the damning contemplation of the passing glories of a temporal triumphalism. From the standpoint of the culture these promises might be viewed as a loss. Yet for those of faith, they are not.

What are they doing? They are taking a definitive step in making themselves richer by joining their lives to a greater purpose. For years, they have studied, prayed, been formed, talked to spiritual directors and counselors, ministered; they have cried and laughed and relaxed and labored and, well frankly, also complained, fought, grumbled, gossiped, fallen back in sin, procrastinated, given in to vices, doubted and shirked responsibilities. They have, in other words, been utterly human and utterly themselves and yet, there has been something else at work, God's grace. In grace they have heard the call of God, experienced in the very depth of their beings, and in the very public arena of Church life. They have heard the call through God's grace, to unite their speech, conduct, love, faith, and purity to a higher purpose of service. To a culture of self, this might be viewed as an impoverishment, but not here. This call is to riches.

The richness of the profession of faith. They promise in their profession of faith to love the Church, to love our holy Church, to see in our Church the richness of a history populated by saints, a history inhabited by run of the mill people striving to serve God in little ways in every place.

They are being called to love the Church by knowing and professing the wealth of its great theological tradition, a tradition forged on the hot anvil of the experience of God who has insinuated himself into the very marrow of the human condition. To love the Church in the richness of the words of the Creed, a creed inscribed in the blood of the holy martyrs, a creed formed on the lips of men and women in countless languages as they are plunged headlong into the rejuvenating waters of baptism. To love the Church, in its teaching and in its teachers, accommodating their wills to the will of our Church, suspending their judgment in order to completely listen to the judgment of wiser hearts and clearer heads.

They are called to love the Church and in loving the Church they do not experience an impoverishment but enrichment because they find in the words of these promises God's promise, God's fidelity, and God's pledge of eternal presence. They find in these promises, in the very heart of the Holy Catholic Church, the joy of Christ instead of the bitterness and animosity of the world, the peace of

God rather than the interminable strife of the so-called free spirits. They find love in the Church and thus wealth in the Church. They want to be emissaries of love in a loss-littered landscape. United in God's love they become richer than what they might have been as they fulfill in their bodies the wonder of Christ's love for his Church and they are blessed.

The promises they make are also promises to love the people of the God, the Body of Christ. This is an oath of fidelity, a bonding of the poverty of their bodies to the wealth of the greater Body.

They promise to love that Body faithfully, those huddled masses of men and women who yearn for dignity and respect. They promise to see only the opulence of Christ in their brothers and sisters who hunger for work, for hope, who labor under the yoke of tyranny, who are beset by violence, who are besieged by terrorism, who are controlled by addictions, who are torn by every kind of sin, to see all of these as intimately bound to themselves and not as distant figures crying out. They promise to make alive for us the lavish possibility of the uncertain, unwed mother, the starving child, the unborn babe, the mistreated migrant worker in the lavishness of their convictions that theirs is a life poured out for the good of all.

They promise to love the Body of Christ through the richness of a life lived in chaste commitment to the one who calls them by name. They promise to be the nuptial expression of Christ's love for his Church. They promise to have the pure hearts cleansed in the fire of celibacy freely chosen. They promise to show us examples of free hearts and minds and souls and the will to say in the very heat of sacrifice: Blessed are they who hope in the Lord.

They promise to be examples of God's love, his love poured out in the sacrificial offering of Christ. Let us see in their frail and sometimes broken personalities the torn body of our Lord. Look at their embattled spirits and see his life sweated in the blood of Gethsemane, the wealth of passion, a passion lived in love for the Body of Christ.

Finally they promise to love the God in themselves. They promise to know themselves, their strengths and their crosses. They are making a declaration of freedom. The rich man in the Gospel, thought he had everything, but the one luxury he did not possess was freedom over his own temptations, his own opinions, his own prejudices, his own predilections. They consider in themselves the extreme poverty of spirit, soul, body that inflicted the poor man in the Gospel. They know their faults and they also know that this poverty is the greatest gift they have for service. The declaration of freedom is a declaration of desire to embrace the cross, to find in the cross their connection to the Church and its Body, to see in the cross the light of hope, to explore in their own crosses the hidden *via dolorosa* to holiness.

*Excerpted from an article by Fr. Denis Robinson, OSB
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