

Fr. David's Weekly Newsletter



February 17, 2012

Seventh Sunday of Ordinary Time

Grant, we pray, almighty God, that, always pondering spiritual things, we may carry out in both word and deed that which is pleasing to you.

Loving Christian family is best soil for vocations

Christian families should be a happy and loving environment in which young people can discern calls to the priesthood or religious life, Pope Benedict XVI says in his message for the World Day of Prayers for Vocations.

“Families are not only the privileged place for human and Christian formation; they can also be ‘the primary and most excellent seed-bed of vocations to a life of consecration to the Kingdom of God,’ by helping their members to see, precisely within the family, the beauty and the importance of the priesthood and the consecrated life,” the Pope said on Feb. 13.

The 49th World Day of Prayer for Vocations will be celebrated on April 29 with the theme, “Vocations, the Gift of the Love of God.” The Pope’s message, which was released Feb. 13,

comes at a time when vocations to the priesthood in most Western countries are on the rise.

In order for that to continue, says the Pope, the Church must “create the conditions that will permit many young people to say ‘yes’ in generous response to God’s loving call.”

This quest, he suggests, finds an “eloquent and particular realization in Christian families” whose love “is an expression of the love of Christ.” In families which are “a community of life and love,” the Pope says, young people are best able to experience the kind of “self-giving love” that Christ showed everyone.

Therefore, priests and parishes should work hard to foster such “homes and schools of communion,” modeled “on the Holy Family of Nazareth, the harmonious reflection on earth of the life of the Most Holy Trinity.”

Lord, heal my soul, for I have sinned against you.

Pope Benedict opens his letter by outlining how all vocations flow from the love of God for humanity.

We are all “loved by God even ‘before’ we come into existence” and are brought into existence “solely by his unconditional love,” to “bring us into full communion with Him,” he writes. The “discovery of this reality” is what “truly and profoundly changes our lives,” he says.

The Pope illustrates his point by quoting the 5th-century theologian St. Augustine of Hippo, who converted to Christianity as an adult and turned towards the “supreme beauty and supreme love” of God.

“Late have I loved you, O Beauty ever ancient, ever new, late have I loved you!” he famously wrote. With these images, says the Pope, “the Saint of Hippo seeks to describe the ineffable mystery of his encounter with God, with God’s love that transforms all of life.”

God’s love, which is an “absolutely free gift,” goes ahead of everyone and “sustains” them along the path of life of life, the Pope said, explaining that this means “every specific vocation” is born of “the initiative of God.”

The Pope asserts in his message that the “appealing beauty of this divine love” must be proclaimed ever anew, “especially to younger generations.”

In this “soil of self-offering and openness to the love of God,” he says, “all vocations are born and grow.”

Pope Benedict also offers some advice to those considering religious vocations. He encourages them to love God and their neighbors - “two expressions of the one divine love” - with a “particular intensity and purity of heart.”

It is a love for others, especially the most disadvantaged, that should inspire them to be “a builder of communion between people and a sower of hope.” The Pope quotes the 19th-century French cleric St. John Vianney, patron of priests, who would say to his people that “priests are not priests for themselves, but for you.”

Pope Benedict concludes his message by imparting his blessing, especially on “those young men and women who strive to listen with a docile heart to God’s voice and are ready to respond generously and faithfully.”

FEBRUARY 22 - ASH WEDNESDAY - THE BEGINNING OF LENT

Ash Wednesday, in the calendar of Western Christianity, is the first day of Lent and occurs 46 days before Easter. It is a moveable fast, falling on a different date each year because it is dependent on the date of Easter. It can occur as early as February 4 or as late as March 10.

According to the canonical gospels of Matthew, Mark and Luke, Jesus spent forty days fasting in the desert before the beginning of his public ministry, during which he endured temptation by Satan. Ash Wednesday marks the beginning of this forty day liturgical period of prayer and fasting.

Ash Wednesday derives its name from the practice of placing ashes on the foreheads of adherents as a sign of mourning and repentance to God. The ashes used are typically gathered after the palms from the previous year's Palm Sunday are burned.

This practice is common in much of Christendom, being celebrated by Catholics, Anglicans, Lutherans, Methodists, Presbyterians, and some Baptist denominations.



CATHOLIC VOCABULARY

ob·la·tion

/əˈblāSHən/

Noun:

1. A thing presented or offered to God or a god.
2. The presentation of bread and wine to God in the Eucharist.

Synonyms: offering - sacrifice - immolation

Origins: early 15c., from O.Fr. *oblation* “offering, sacrifice,” from L. *oblationem* (nom. *oblatio*) “an offering, presenting, gift,” in L.L. “sacrifice,” from L. *oblatus*

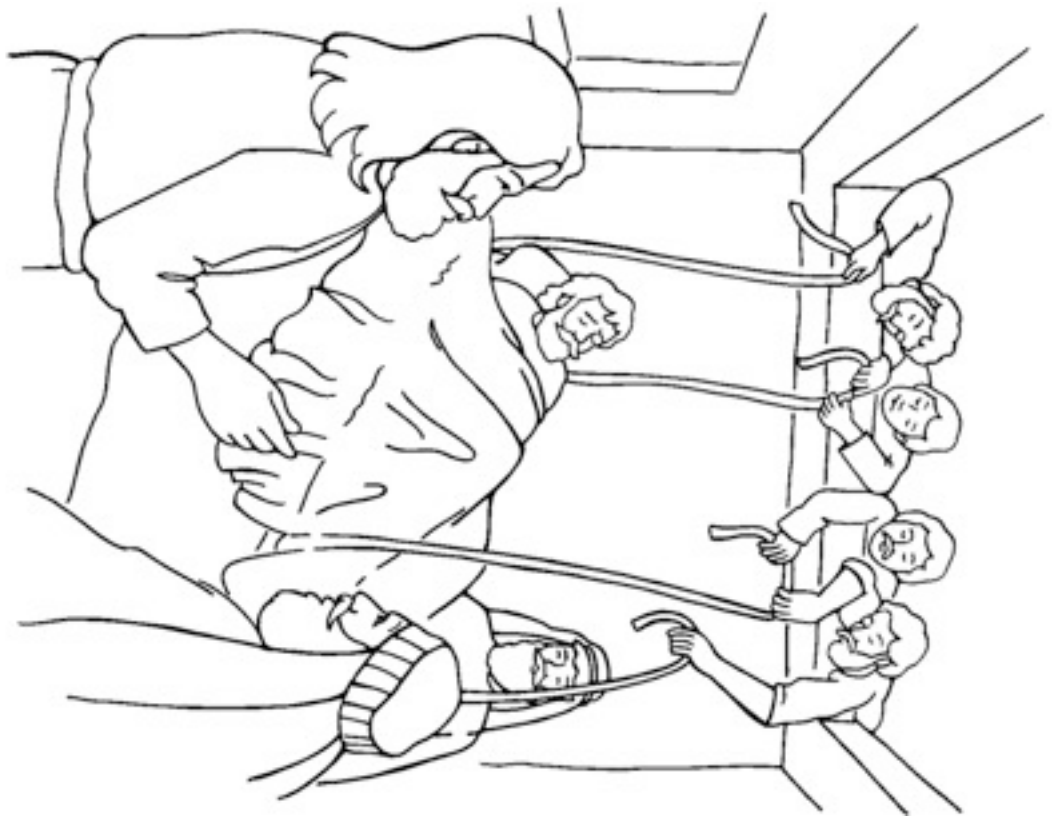


Parts of the Eucharistic Prayer: the Oblation

The *oblation* or offering follows the memorial in the Eucharistic Prayer. Prior to the consecration, the priest asks the Lord to accept the gifts of bread and wine as a token of ourselves. But now, following the consecration, the bread and wine no longer exist; they have been changed into the Body and Blood of the risen Christ. Christ is now offered to the Father. In the First Eucharistic Prayer, sometimes called the Roman Canon, three Old Testament persons are mentioned whose offerings were acceptable to the Father: Abel, who offered the firstborn lamb of his flock; Abraham, who was willing to offer his own son; and Melchisedech, who offered bread and wine as a priest of God.

Each of these three Biblical sacrifices foreshadows the perfect sacrifice of Jesus Christ, which fulfilled all others. Monsignor Ronald Knox explains, “All those remote people in the Old Testament are dragged in here, because we want to remind ourselves that the instinct of offering God sacrifice is an instinct which the human race had long before the Christian dispensation came to explain how the thing could be done. All those old sacrifices of bullocks and goats and rams under the Jewish Law, and in their way, even the sacrifices offered by the old pagans to their gods when they were trying to do their best, are caught up and contained in this supreme sacrifice which Our Lord’s Death has now made it possible for us to offer.”

Christ is, therefore, the High priest offering the Mass, but in the oblation, we discover that He is also the Victim being offered.



When Jesus returned to Capernaum after some days, it became known that he was at home. Many gathered together so that there was no longer room for them, not even around the door, and he preached the word to them. They came bringing to him a paralytic carried by four men. Unable to get near Jesus because of the crowd, they opened up the roof above him. After they had broken through, they let down the mat on which the paralytic was lying.

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| above | lying |
| alone | man |
| asking | mat |
| astounded | mind |
| authority | never |
| away | opened |
| blaspheming | pick |
| bringing | sitting |
| broken | preached |
| Capernaum | son |
| carried | returned |
| child | speak |
| crowd | rise |
| door | things |
| down | roof |
| earth | thinking |
| easier | room |
| everyone | through |
| forgive | rose |
| four | together |
| gathered | said |
| glorified | unable |
| God | scribes |
| hearts | up |
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