



CHURCH OF SAINT MARY

510 N. Prospect Ave. • Alma, MI 48801
Office (989)463-5370 • Fax (989)463-1369

MOUNT SAINT JOSEPH CHURCH

605 S. Franklin St. • St. Louis, MI 48880
Office (989)681-5080 • Fax (989)681-2887



Dear Parish Family,

January 16, 2011

Starting next weekend at St. Mary, the Children's Liturgy of the Word will begin in the Parish Center. With the winter weather, the hope is one less trip inside-to-outside-to-inside will allow more time for the teachers and be easier on both parents and children. See the notice in the bulletin for details. And so, remember next week to drop off children who will be part of the Children's Liturgy of the Word at the Parish Center before Mass.

We continue on Wednesdays with the video series *Boundaries*. It's not too late to participate in this program which will meet on Wednesdays at 6:45 pm in St. Mary Parish Center through March 3.

Last Monday our parish teams from Mt. St. Joseph and St. Mary played each other. I was able to see 75% of the game before heading out for prison ministry. It was a lot of fun on the sidelines. This week, I look forward to a little court time.

You may notice the gradual re-design and re-organization of the parish bulletin. Our desire is to present the information in a consistent and structured format. Please be patient as we fine-tune the bulletin layout.

Last week was Vocations Awareness Week. I want to thank the novices from the Religious Sisters of Mercy for taking the time to speak in our classrooms and join our students for our Friday school Mass. The students also made cards or wrote letters to our diocesan seminarians.

The new year is quickly slipping away! Please remember to pray for each other daily! Let's not forget any opportunities to tap into the infinite graces poured out upon us by our loving and generous God!

Fr. David

The Faith Explained

ACTIVE PARTICIPATION

Every now and again, we hear talk of active participation during the Mass. There are many various interpretations of what this means. If we are going to understand this phrase, we should know that it dates from the early twentieth century and a document written by Pope St. Pius X, where he calls for an "active participation in the mysteries and in the public and solemn prayer of the Church." Active participation is essentially contemplative, and in no sense is it *primarily* concerned with our doing things in or to the Liturgy. Active participation is a state of being contemplatively connected to the profound actions of the Sacred Liturgy, and from that privileged encounter we receive grace. By actively participating in the worship of the Church during the Mass, we engage and exercise the internal and spiritual consequences of our Baptism and Confirmation. Our liturgical attitude ought to lead to silent, recollected adoration. The liturgy must also leave space for the development of interior prayer by all those participating in the Mass. Active participation means primarily contemplatively engaged participation in the saving work of our redemption – where the worshipper both encounters Christ and is made a partaker in the mysteries of our redemption. The liturgy derives its greatness from what it is – not from what we make of it. Our participation is, of course, necessary, but only as a means of inserting ourselves humbly into the spirit of the liturgy, and of serving Jesus Christ – the true subject of the liturgy. The liturgy is revelation received in faith and prayer, and its measure is consequently the faith of the Church, in which revelation is received.

The Wedding Feast at Cana and the Paschal Mystery

There were, in [Jesus'] life, two occasions when His human nature seemed to show an unwillingness to take on His burden of suffering. In the Garden [of Gethsemane], He asked His Father if it be possible to take away His chalice of woe. But He immediately afterward acquiesced in His Father's will: "Not My will, but Thine be done." The same apparent reluctance was also manifested in the face of the will of His mother. Cana was a rehearsal for Golgotha. He was not questioning the wisdom of beginning His Public Life and going to death at this particular point in time; it was rather a question of submitting His reluctant human nature to obedience to the Cross. There is a striking parallel between His Father's bidding Him to His public death and His mother's bidding Him to His public life. Obedience triumphed in both cases; at Cana, the water was changed into wine; at Calvary, the wine was changed into blood.

He was telling His mother that she was virtually pronouncing a sentence of death over Him. Few are the mothers who send their sons to battlefields; but here was one who was actually hastening the hour of her Son's mortal conflict with the forces of evil. If He agreed to her request, He would be beginning His hour of death and glorification. To the Cross He would go with double commission, one from His Father in heaven, the other from His mother on earth.

As soon as He has consented to begin His "Hour," He proceeded immediately to tell her that her relations with Him would be henceforth changed. Until then, during His hidden life, she had been known as the mother of Jesus. But now that He was launched on the work of Redemption, she would no longer be just His mother, but also the mother of all His human brethren whom He would redeem. To indicate this new relationship, He now addressed her, not as "Mother" but as the "Universal Mother" or "Woman." What a ring those words had to people who lived in the light of the Old Testament. When Adam fell, God spoke to Satan and foretold that He would put enmity between his seed and "the Woman," for goodness would have a progeny as well as evil. The world would have not only the City of Man which Satan claimed as his own, but also the City of God. The "Woman" did have a seed, and it was her Seed that was standing now at the marriage feast, the Seed that would fall to the ground and die and then spring forth into new life.

The moment the "Hour" began, she became "the Woman"; she would have other children too, not according to the flesh, but according to the spirit. If He was to be the new Adam, the founder of a redeemed humanity, she would be the new Eve and the mother of that new humanity. As Our Lord was a man, she was His mother; and as He was a Savior, she was also the mother of all whom He would save. John, who was present at that wedding, was also present at the climax of the "Hour" on Calvary. He heard Our Lord calling her "Woman" from the Cross and then saying to her, "Behold thy son." When Our Lord raised the son of the widow of Naim from the dead, He said, "Give him back to his mother." On the Cross, He consoled His mother by giving her another son, John, and with him the whole of redeemed humanity.

At the Resurrection He gave Himself back to her, to show that while she had gained new children, she had not lost Him. At Cana the prophecy that Simeon had made to her in the temple was confirmed: henceforth, whatever involved her Son would involve her, too; whatever happened to Him would happen to her. If He was destined to go to the Cross, so was she; and if He was

now beginning His Public Life, then she would begin a new life too, no longer as just the mother of Jesus, but as the mother of all whom Jesus the Savior would redeem. He called Himself "Son of Man," a title embracing all humanity; she would be henceforth the "Mother of Men." Just as she was at His side as He began His Hour, so would she be at His side at its climactic finish. When she took Him away from the temple as a boy of twelve, it was because she sensed that His Hour had not yet come; He obeyed her then and returned to Nazareth with her. Now, He told her that His Hour had not yet come, but she bade Him begin it, and He obeyed. At Cana she gave Him as a Savior to sinners; on the Cross He gave her as a refuge to sinners.

When He suggested that His first miracle would lead unerringly to His Cross and death, and that she would become henceforth a Mother of Sorrows.

What a magnificent valedictory! She never speaks again in Scripture. Seven times she had spoken in the Scriptures, but now that Christ had shown Himself, like the sun in the full brilliance of His Divinity, Our Lady was willingly overshadowed like the moon, as John later on described her.

The six water pots were filled, making about one hundred and twenty gallons, and in the beautiful language of Richard Crashaw, "the conscious water saw its God and blushed." The first miracle was something like creation itself; it was done by the power of "the Word." The wine He created was so good that the bridegroom was reproached by the steward.

Truly the best wine was kept. Up until then in the unfolding of revelation, the poor wine had been the prophets, judges, and kings, Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, Moses, Joshua — all were like the water awaiting the miracle of the Expected of the Nations. The world generally gives its best pleasures first; afterward come the dregs and the bitterness. But Christ reversed the order and gave us the feast after the fast, the Resurrection after the Crucifixion, the joy of Easter Sunday after the sorrow of Good Friday.

The Cross is everywhere. When a man stretches out his arms in relaxation, he unconsciously forms the image of the reason for the Son of Man's coming. So too at Cana, the shadow of the Cross was thrown across a "woman," and the first stroke of the "Hour" was sounded like a bell of execution. In all the other incidents of His life, the Cross came first, then the joy. But at Cana, it was the joy of the nuptials that came first—the nuptials of the Bridegroom and the Bride of redeemed humanity; only after that are we reminded that the Cross is the condition of that ecstasy.

Thus He did at a marriage feast what He would not do in a desert; He worked in the full gaze of men what He had refused to do before Satan. Satan asked Him to turn stones into bread in order that He might become an economic Messiah; His mother asked Him to change water into wine that He might become a Savior. Satan tempted Him from death; Mary "tempted" Him to death and Resurrection. Satan tried to lead Him from the Cross; Mary sent Him toward it. Later on, He would take hold of the bread that Satan had said men needed, and the wine that His mother had said the wedding guests needed, and He would change them both into the memorial of His Passion and His death. Then He would ask that men renew that memorial, even "unto the consummation of the world." The antiphon of His life continues to ring: Everyone else came into the world to live; He came into the world to die.

Excerpted from: Life of Christ, ©1958 by Archbishop Fulton J. Sheen.