



CHURCH OF SAINT MARY

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Dear Parish Family,

May 22, 2011

Because the diocesan mailing was delayed, instead of last week this week will be our parishes' commitment weekend for Catholic Services Appeal; and we will collect pledge cards. It doesn't matter how much you are able to contribute, what matters is that you participate. CSA provides many services that directly affect our parish in the form of youth, lay ministry, school and religious education, retreats, and the formation of future clergy. Your support of this appeal is very much appreciated. Please help us reach 100% participation!

As we continue to honor our Blessed Mother this month, consider taking advantage of the many prayer opportunities offered during the week: the Novena to the Mother of Perpetual Help after the Tuesday evening 8:00 pm Mass at St. Mary; the Rosary before any daily or Sunday Mass at both parishes; the Rosary group at 11:00 am on Wednesdays at Mt. St. Joseph. You may already be praying the Rosary on your own during the day, or perhaps a family Rosary in the evening. If not, you may wish to start. In any case, use this month to increase your devotion to Christ's Mother, and our Mother. Rosaries are available on the tables near the entrances of both churches and are free to a good home.

There are copies of St. Louis de Montfort's Consecration to Jesus through Mary available at the entrances of the church in the white envelopes, free of charge. This 33-day prayer journey is a wonderful way to deepen your relationship with Our Lord through His Blessed Mother during the month dedicated to the Mother of God.

This month we call upon Our Lady's intercession for our first communicants, mothers, graduates, families, and for each other. God bless you!

Fr. David

Sacred Signs and Symbols

Doors and Doorways

Every time we enter a church, if we notice it, a question is put to us. *Why does a church have doors?* It seems a foolish question. Naturally, to go in by. Yes, but doors are not necessary - only a doorway. An opening with a board partition to close it off would be a cheap and practical convenience of letting people out and in. But the door serves more than a practical use; it is a reminder.

When you step through the doorway of a church you are leaving the outer-world behind and entering an inner world. The outside world is a fair place abounding in life and activity, but also a place with a mingling of the base and ugly. It is a sort of market place, crossed and recrossed by all and sundry. Perhaps "unholy" is not quite the word for it, yet there is something profane about the world. Behind the church doors is an inner place, separated from the market place, a silent, consecrated and holy spot. It is very certain that the whole world is the work of God and his gift to us, that we may meet Him anywhere, that everything we receive is from God's hand, and, when received religiously, is holy. Nevertheless people have always felt that certain precincts were in a special manner set apart and dedicated to God.

Between the outer and the inner world are the doors. They are the barriers between the market place and the sanctuary, between what belongs to the world at large and what has become consecrated to God. And the door warns the person who opens it to go inside that they must now leave behind the thoughts, wishes and cares which here are out of place, his curiosity, his vanity, his worldly interests, his secular self. "Make yourself clean. The ground you tread is holy ground."

Do not rush through the doors. Let us take time to open our hearts to their meaning and pause a moment beforehand so as to make our entering-in a fully intentional and conscious act.

The doors have yet something else to say. Notice how as you cross the threshold you unconsciously lift your head and your eyes, and how as you survey the great interior space of the church there also takes place in you an inward expansion and enlargement. Its great width and height have an analogy to infinity and eternity. A church is a symbol and a sign of the heavenly dwelling place of God. Mountains indeed are higher, the wide blue sky outside stretches immeasurably further. But whereas outside space is unconfined and formless, the portion of space set aside for the church has been formed, fashioned, designed at every point with God in view. The long pillared aisles, the width and solidity of the walls, the high arched and vaulted roof, bring home to us that this is God's house and the seat of his hidden presence.

It is the doors that admit us to this mysterious place. Lay aside, they say, all that cramps and narrows, all that sinks the mind. Open your heart, lift up your eyes. Let your soul be free, for this is God's temple.

Romano Guardini

PRECEPTS OF THE CHURCH

The Precepts of the Church are a description of the absolute minimum actions required of Catholics regarding the Church.

The Church uses these precepts to remind us that Christian life requires a commitment to prayer and active participation in the liturgy and sacraments. If we fall below this bare-minimum level, we can't rightly consider ourselves to be in full communion with the Church.

Each of these precepts of the Church is a requirement. Together with the Ten Commandments, they represent the minimum level of moral living. Intentional violation of the precepts or the Commandments is a grave matter, meaning a mortal sin.

The Precepts

1. *You shall attend Mass on Sundays and on holy days of obligation and rest from servile labor.*

We must "sanctify the day commemorating the Resurrection of the Lord" (Sunday), as well as the principal feast days, known as holy days of obligation. This requires attending Mass, "and by resting from those works and activities which could impede such a sanctification of these days."

2. *You shall confess your sins at least once a year.*

We must prepare for the Eucharist by means of the Sacrament of Reconciliation (Confession). This sacrament "continues Baptism's work of conversion and forgiveness."

3. *You shall receive the sacrament of the Eucharist at least during the Easter season.*

This "guarantees as a minimum the reception of the Lord's Body and Blood in connection with the Paschal feasts, the origin and center of the Christian liturgy."

4. *You shall observe the days of fasting and abstinence established by the Church.*

"The fourth precept ensures the times of asceticism and penance which prepare us for the liturgical feasts and help us acquire mastery over our instincts and freedom of heart." See below for more about fasting & abstinence.

5. *You shall help to provide for the needs of the Church.*

"The fifth precept means that the faithful are obliged to assist with the material needs of the Church, each according to his own ability."

Note that these precepts of the Church are required, unless you have a legitimate reason for not meeting them. For example:

- *If you are sick, tending to a sick child or person, or camping in the wilderness on Sunday and cannot get to Mass, it is not a grave violation to miss Mass that day.*
- *Children, the elderly, and pregnant or nursing women do not have to fast on normal fast days.*

More about fasting & abstinence

One of the precepts of the Church requires fasting & abstinence as signs of repentance. Repentance means to turn away from sin and turn back to God.

Catholic spirituality traditionally includes in repentance some form of penance. Penance means some practice that lets us express sorrow for our sins and helps repair the damage that sin has caused.

Penance gives us important practice in resisting temptation, thereby strengthening us. It greatly strengthens a number of virtues, especially charity, and it greatly enriches life.

The Church has two official forms of penitential practices: fasting and abstinence. These are so important that they're one of the precepts.

Fasting is reducing the amount of food you eat below normal levels. Specifically, on fast days you may eat one full meal and two smaller meals, but those two smaller together should not exceed the amount of the normal meal. Snacking is also prohibited on fast days.

All Catholics age 18 to 59 are required to fast on Ash Wednesday and Good Friday. You are excused from fasting if you have a legitimate need to eat a normal amount of food on fast days. This includes:

- *The sick or infirm, including handicapped or mentally ill people who need to eat or cannot make a free choice to fast*
- *Pregnant or nursing women*
- *Some manual laborers*

Abstinence means not eating meat (fish is not considered meat in this case). All Catholics 14 and older are required to observe abstinence on these days:

- *Ash Wednesday, Good Friday (the Friday before Easter), and all Fridays in Lent.*
- *Outside the U.S., this is required on all Fridays of the year, in honor of the Passion of Jesus on Good Friday.*
- *In the U.S., it is still strongly recommended to observe Friday abstinence outside of Lent, but Catholics may choose to substitute another penitential practice or act of charity for these days.*

Go beyond the minimum!

Always remember: the precepts of the Church are minimum levels of participation in the life of the Church. Out of love for Christ and a desire to advance in the spiritual life, you will normally try to do far more than they require. Many people recommend that Catholics: (1) *Attend Mass at least one more time a week.* (2) *Go to confession at least once a month or more.* (3) *Find a spiritual director to give you guidance for growing in the spiritual life.* (4) *Receive the Eucharist at every Mass, if you meet the guidelines for reception.* (5) *Make a habit of practicing penitential and charitable acts beyond those required by the Church.* (6) *Contribute as much as possible to the material needs of the Church and the needy.*

From an article on www.beginningcatholic.com