



*From the Pastor
13th Sunday in
Ordinary Time - A
July 2, 2023*

THE IMPORTANCE OF SACRED LITURGY.

Our next reflection on
*Pope Francis' 2022
Apostolic Letter,
'Desiderio Desideravi,'*

Latin for *Jesus' pre-Last Supper* words: *"I have earnestly desired [to eat this Passover with you before I suffer.]" [Luke 22:15]* considers the *Liturgy* as **THE** place to encounter *Christ*. *'Desiderio Desideravi'* [DD] dovetails so perfectly with my years-long series on the *2022-2025 National Eucharistic Revival*: this is *Part #31* of that ongoing reflection on the *Eucharist*.

WE ENCOUNTER CHRIST IN THE LITURGY.

We base our *Faith* on far more than the *Gospels*, which tell of the *Apostles'* experience of the earthly *Jesus* and the *Risen Lord* before His *Ascension*, and the writings of the *Apostles* or biblical *Letters* of *Saints Peter* and *Paul, James* and *Jude*. We have *Christ's Real Presence* in our midst in the *Gift* of the *Eucharist*! For *Christ's Incarnation*, His becoming flesh in the womb of the *Virgin* who gave birth to Him, was **NOT** an event that *ended* upon His *Ascension*. *Christ REMAINS* present **TO** us - **FOR** us - and **IN** us - through the *Eucharist*! For as *Jesus* assured us at His *Ascension*: *"Behold, I am with you always, until the end of the age."* [Matthew 28:20b]

Christ fulfills His promise to be our *Emmanuel*, our *'God-with-us'*, in many ways. He is present in the poor and needy; those who gather in *His holy Name*; those *sacramentally married*; and the *Ordained*. We hear His voice in the *sacred Scriptures* and, above all, we eat *His Body* and drink *His Blood* in the *Eucharist*. The question is: are we as present to *Christ* as He is to us?

As the *Holy Father* puts it: do we say to ourselves: *"I am Nicodemus, the Samaritan woman at the well, the man possessed by demons at Capernaum, the paralytic in the house of Peter, the sinful woman pardoned, the woman afflicted by hemorrhages, the daughter of Jairus, the blind man of Jericho, Zacchaeus, Lazarus, the thief and Peter both pardoned?"* [DD. #11] For now, through the *Sacraments*, especially *Eucharist*, *Christ* enlightens and enriches, heals and restores, comforts and consoles, forgives and reconciles us - and raises us to new life!

THE WATER OF BAPTISM. To help us better understand the significance of the *Sacraments* and their symbols or signs, the *Pope* cites the prayer used to *consecrate water* for *Baptisms* at the *Easter Vigil*; it may also be used at other times. It summarizes the main ways *God* used *water* from the world's creation until its recreation through His *Son's Passion, Death* and *Resurrection*. Here are the five main ways which show that *God* had *Baptism* in mind, even as He created the essential, great gift of *water*!

* *Scripture* says: *"In the beginning ... the earth was without form or shape, with darkness over the abyss and a mighty wind sweeping over the waters."* [Genesis 1:1a-2] The Hebrew word for *'mighty wind'* - *'ruach'* - also means *'Spirit'* - which is why, on *Pentecost*, before the *Holy Spirit* appeared as *tongues of flame*, *"there came from the sky a noise like a strong driving wind."* [Acts 2:2] Thus starts *God's* intimate presence in *water*!

* To wash the world of sin and restore *Noah* and his *family* - and, in time, all the *baptized* - to grace, *God* flooded the earth with *water*. As our first Pope explained, *"... God patiently waited in the days of Noah during the building of the ark, in which a few persons, eight in all, were saved through water. This prefigured baptism, which saves you now."* [1 Peter 3:20-21a]

* *God* controlled the *Red Sea waters*, causing them to separate, freeing His *People* from slavery and certain death, and leading them to freedom. No wonder this event, from the *Book of Exodus*, **MUST** be proclaimed at the *Easter Vigil Mass*.

* The *waters* of the *Jordan* were sanctified by *Christ*, who, though sinless, chose to perform a repentant act by being *Baptized* by *John the Baptist*, raising *water* to a *sacramental*. He also commanded us: *"... make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the holy Spirit."* [Matthew 28:19]

* As a fitting crescendo, *God* blended *water* and *Blood* as it flowed from His *Son's Sacred Heart* as He slept in death on the *Cross*. This 'crowns' the 'regal reality' of those who become one with *Christ* through *Baptism*, and makes us, the *Church*, the *Bride of Christ the Bridegroom*, as we will see in next week's article. So, stay tuned!

In His holy Name,

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