



*From the Pastor
20th Sunday in
Ordinary Time - A
August 20, 2023*

THE POWER OF SIGNS & SYMBOLS.

In reflection #9 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],* we consider the *'Art of Celebrating'* required of all who take part in the *Sacred Liturgy*. For past articles in this series on the three-year *National Eucharistic Revival* [this is article #38!] and the *Holy Father's Letter*, visit our *Parish* website.

The next and last part of *'Desiderio Desideravi'* deals with the *'Art of Celebrating.'* While this applies primarily to the *Ordained* who lead the *holy Mass* and, to a lesser extent, to the *Deacons, Readers, Extraordinary Ministers of Holy Communion, Ushers, Altar Servers, Music Ministers, Sacristans*, etc., who have a special role in the *Sacred Rites*, it applies to *all* who participate in *holy Mass* in *any* way. I begin with three reflections on three different experiences I had over the years of *'not-so-ideal' holy Masses*. [The names and places have been changed to protect the innocent - and the guilty!]

In the years after *Vatican Council II*, innovation and experimentation were out of control. I attended a *Retreat* at which the *Priest* celebrated *holy Mass* - but not in the order I - nor the *Roman Missal* - knew! I needed a scorecard to check off each part of *Mass* to make sure we covered them all! No one knew what to do ... or what was coming next! On the other hand, I 'watched' a *holy Mass* at which the *Priest*, who was so fearful of forgetting or failing to keep any rubrics, he never engaged anyone in the celebration! [That's why I said I merely 'watched' that *Mass* ... for I did not feel as if I had truly 'participated' in it, due to his 'personal' display of piety.]

The third experience, which all of us have probably had, is that of participating in a *Mass* or other *Sacred Rite* conducted in another language - or in which the *Presider* had a heavy accent, rendering most of, if not all of it, difficult to understand, if not totally unintelligible. That we are disappointed when this happens is a great sign: for before the reforms of *Vatican II*, we were

content to pray the *Rosary* or do our own thing as the *Priest* prayed the prayers of the *holy Mass*!

In *Seminary* formation for *Priesthood*, we have in-depth studies of the biblical basis of our *Rituals*, their historical development which always remain true to the original form, and the symbolism behind every action, its purpose and intent. We are warned of the damage we can do by ignoring or misinterpreting rubrics. And we are reminded of the need to constantly update ourselves with the *Church's* latest adaptations and emendations of the prescribed rubrics. We are invited to clergy meetings and are emailed any updates or changes to our *Rites*. And as I mentioned last week, all people are strongly encouraged to update themselves by using all the means the *Church* provides for our ongoing, never-ending *Faith Formation*. I strive to do my part, and hope you strive to do yours!

Since I began with three less-than-ideal examples of *holy Mass*, let me end with what is, for me, one of, if not the most magnificent celebration of the entire year: *Holy Thursday's Mass of the Lord's Supper*. What makes it so great? It is the only *Mass* permitted that day, so it brings out the 'cream-of-the-crop' of our four weekend *Masses*.

Since it is not a holy day of obligation, no one is there to simply fulfill a requirement. Everyone *actively* participates; the *singing* literally rocks the rafters! No one leaves early. [There's no collection, but I'm sure that does not matter!] We pull out all the stops; no short forms are used; we opt for every option; we sing whatever can be sung. Although the *Mass* is far longer than almost any other *Mass*, no one complains; in fact, many are amazed at how quickly the time goes. At Holy Thursday's *Mass*, I am most keenly aware, as I lift up everyone in prayer, of being lifted up by them. It is truly a communal celebration!

While not every celebration can be as uplifting and exemplary, we must all try to be more prepared for, more attentive to, and more participatory in the *Sacred Rites*. What will YOU do to make our weekly worship celebrations a union of heaven and earth, of *God* and His *People*, of the *Risen Lord* and His *Disciples*, of the *Holy Spirit* and His *Temples*?

In His holy Name,

Very Rev. Thomas J. Serafin, VF, KCHS