



*From the Pastor
21st Sunday in
Ordinary Time - A
August 27, 2023*

THE POWER OF SIGNS & SYMBOLS.

Reflection #10 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],* looks at how the prescribed communal actions in the *Sacred Liturgy* help us *"become one body, one spirit in Christ."* [Eucharistic Prayer III] For past articles in this series on the three-year *National Eucharistic Revival* [this is article #39!] and the *Holy Father's Letter*, visit our *Parish* website.

As I explained in one of my first reflections on *'Desiderio Desideravi,'* there are two mindsets that affect the way we worship: *Individualism* and *Subjectivism*, which have similar traits. *Individualism* leads us to consider only ourselves, and not communal or collective aspects of worship. We hear it in the attitude that "I must get something *personally* out of it, for myself." It downplays or dismisses how our words and actions - or lack thereof - affect others. *Subjectivism* renders the purpose or meaning of things to each person; there is no place for revealed *Truths* or external reasonings. These easily destroy any sense of community or the collective purpose and meaning of *Sacred Rites*.

These two dynamisms are not the only things that have prodded some, perhaps many, to excuse themselves from weekly participation in the *holy Mass* and other *Rites*. *COVID* restrictions sadly broke revered routines that have yet to be reestablished; some have been culled into thinking that watching the *holy Mass* on a TV or computer screen is the same thing as being actively present for the *Sacred Mysteries*! Some erroneously believe it is enough to have a private *'Me & Jesus Moment'* ... but *Jesus* calls us into a *Community*, His *Church* - and comes to us most profoundly in the *Eucharist* which, unless you're an *Ordained Priest*, you cannot confect at home!

"ONE BODY, ONE SPIRIT IN CHRIST." As I mentioned above, the *Priest* prays these words after the *Consecration* in *Eucharistic Prayer III*. To help us 'see' this unity of body and spirit, the *Church* intentionally has us move 'in unison' at

various times during the *holy Mass*. These so-called *'Catholic Aerobics'* are not intended to create a pretty show, although pageantry is part of religious ritual. We do all this to give outward expression to the inward reality that we are *"one body, one spirit in Christ!"* We gather, carefully walk in processions, sit, stand, kneel, bow, strike our breast, sing, become silent, raise our voices in acclamations, look, listen, and hopefully think!

Many of these actions have a set purpose: a feeling or emotion, sentiment or belief. We bow to admit our unworthiness or humble gratitude; we kneel to express sorrow for sins and our need for forgiveness; we bend low as a remedy for our pride; we mark the *Sign of the Cross* on ourselves to personally accept the graces and blessings won for us by the *Passion, Death* and *Resurrection* of *Christ*. However, there is one outward sign highlighted often in the *Pope's Letter* which, I must admit, I am not very good at practicing or encouraging; and that is: *silence*.

SILENCE, PLEASE! In a world of so much noise, where so many hope for a few moments of peace and quiet, the *Church* prescribes the remedy: the rubrics call for a few moments of *SILENCE* during the *Sacred Liturgy*. We are directed to pause for silent prayer: during the *Penitential Act*; after the invitation to *"Let us pray"* before the *Collect*; between the *Readings* and after the *Homily*; in the *Eucharistic Prayer* when we remember our intentions and the dead; and during the *Prayer after Communion*, unless a period of silence preceded it. Yet whenever we pause for silent prayer, everyone seems to get so antsy!

LET THE HOLY SPIRIT SPEAK! The purpose of liturgical silence is *NOT* to escape from reality or the cacophony of noise that inundates our ears and brain! It is to allow the *Holy Spirit* to speak. In the *Rite of Ordination*, when the *Candidate* for the *Diaconate, Priesthood* or the *Episcopacy* kneels before the *Ordaining Bishop* for the *Laying on of Hands*, it is done in *total silence*. After all is said and done by us, we allow *God* to speak in a moment of silence. Will we be more open to moments of silence during the *Sacred Rites*, to allow *God* to speak, and to let His voice echo and reecho in our minds and hearts?

In His holy Name,

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