



APOSTLES of the HOLY SPIRIT

# *Bulletin*

*Spring 2016*



**COME  
HOLY SPIRIT  
HELP ME  
TO  
BRING BACK  
REVERENCE  
IN  
CHURCH**



**“When My People Humble Themselves And Seek  
My Presence I Will Revive Their Land” 2 CH 7:14**

# REVERENCE

**Reverence.** The virtue that inclines a person to show honor and respect for persons who possess some dignity. There are four forms of reverence, corresponding to four forms of dignity: 1. familial reverence toward one's parents or those who take the place of parents; 2. civil reverence toward persons holding civil authority; 3. ecclesiastical reverence toward the Pope, bishops, priests, and others in the service of the Church; 4. religious reverence toward any person, place, or object related to God. (Etym. Latin *reverentia*, awe, respect.)

*From Modern Catholic Dictionary*

*By Fr. John A Hardon S.J.*

## SOME THOUGHTS ON REVERENCE IN CHURCH

When you enter your church, picture in your mind a very large throne sitting upon the altar. God is sitting there in all His majestic glory with powerful, glorious angels by His side. He is sitting there waiting just for you. How would you act? What would you do? Would you saunter into church talking and joking? Would you ignore your God sitting there waiting for you? Would you wear shorts and a tank top or would you think He was worthy of more appropriate dress? Would you want to bow down to Him because He holds your heart in the palm of His hand?

When He gives you His very body and blood during the Eucharistic celebration, because in His love He wants you to be truly one with Him, would you walk out the door without loving Him and giving Him proper thanks? Would you stand around in church after Mass, talking and laughing like you were at a cocktail party? Or would you reverence the awesome presence of your God and say to your friends, "Let's talk outside."?

## COME HOLY SPIRIT HELP US TO BRING BACK REVERENCE IN CHURCH

## COME HOLY SPIRIT REKINDLE IN OUR HEARTS THE LOVE AND REVERENCE OF THE BLESSED SACRAMENT

Our God is an awesome God. Full of power, love and mercy. In His great love for us He chooses to dwell with us day and night in the Tabernacles of our Churches. Is that not truly a miraculous thing, that is worthy of our awe, of our thanksgiving and our praise and most certainly, our reverence in His majestic presence, reverence in our actions and reverence in our manner of dress.

"Then if my people who bear my name humble themselves, and pray and seek my presence and turn from their wicked ways, myself will hear from heaven and forgive their sins and restore their land."

II Chronicles 7:14

## THE WORLD IS IN A MESS

We all know that we are a mess, in a great turmoil. Society is in a serious crisis. Faith is in a great crisis. We would have to be blind not to see it. When sin is publicly advertised as normal and 'correct', and millions of abortions are performed each year, something has gone radically wrong. How did we ever get into this mess?

## WORSHIP OF IDOLS

The answer is very clear and plain; we have put God aside to turn ourselves towards gods and idols of our own making, like materialistic things, pleasures, the cult of the body, thirst for money, addiction to TV, etc. These things have become gods and idols to many. And then, we wonder why we are in such a mess.

Because we have repeated the Old Testament infidelities, and worshiped idols made with our own hands, we are in trouble, in serious trouble. Who is going to save our troubled world? The Saviour of the world! Only Jesus can bring true peace to the world. Only God can redirect the course of world history back to the path of peace. "Turn to me and be saved, all the ends of the earth, says the Lord." (Is 45:22)

Holy Spirit of God, renew the face of the earth by granting a new Pentecost in our time.



# DRESS, DEMEANOR, DISCIPLINE SHOW HOW WE VALUE HOLY MASS

by Bishop Robert Vasa

Several years ago I had the opportunity, while visiting Washington, DC, to observe the changing of the guard at the tomb of the Unknown Soldier at Arlington National Cemetery.

I was so struck by the simple, deliberate elegance of the ceremony that I stayed for extra minutes simply to watch the young men march to and fro with that same simple, deliberate elegance. The uniforms were absolutely impeccable, the shoes shined to pure gloss, the faces of the guards set like granite, the measured steps precise, the entire person focused on the job at hand. It was clear from all of the above that the young men knew that what they were about was serious and important.

I have reflected repeatedly on the Arlington experience as it relates to what we do in our Catholic Churches. The Holy Sacrifice of the mass is the most significant event in the world. As the priest and ministers enter the church and proceed down the aisle, there is not the expectation that they imitate the guards at Arlington, but it would be most appropriate to do so. The guard at Arlington processes solemnly in front of a tomb of national significance, and he is rightfully dignified. Every altar in every Catholic Church has eternal significance and deserves a regard greater than that demanded by the national tomb.

I am not advocating a religious solemnity devoid of joy or humanity, but it appears that Arlington may have something which the Catholic Church needs. The dignity manifested by the guard points towards and accentuates the dignity of the place. Silence is observed at the national Tomb. Silence is a sign of respect for the place and the meaning of the place. Silence is appropriate and enforced vigorously there. Order is enforced there.

As I stood watching the guard making his seemingly routine and non-variable march, he suddenly broke out of line two steps at an angle to his right. He removed the rifle from his shoulder, held it in his hands, and said very forcefully, "Stay behind the barrier"! A couple of seconds later, he repeated the command, at which a woman who had crossed into forbid-

den territory to get a better picture retreated to the area reserved for visitors. He then returned to his line and resumed his march. No apology, no explanation; the sign said "No Trespassing"; what part of "No" was not understood?

The trespass onto sacred secular soil was deemed unacceptable. The dignity of the place demanded order and an observance of that order. Once again, I do not advocate this kind of rigid, cold enforcement, but the dignity of our churches needs to be fostered and preserved. The dignity of this sacred place will be lost as the sacredness of the area around the tomb would quickly be lost, if there is not a decided effort to preserve it.

Wouldn't it be cute if four or six little 5-year-olds dressed up like Marines and marched back and forth with the guard? It might be cute, but it would not befit the dignity of the place or the solemnity of the occasion. Yet time and again, we try to introduce people and behaviors into our churches which are deemed "cute" and therefore somehow mandatory. I suggest that "cute" has its place, but Arlington National Cemetery is not one of them, and neither are our churches which house Jesus Himself, Body, Blood, Soul and Divinity.

Several years ago, the Holy Father reinstituted a dress code for the churches of Rome, his diocese. No one in shorts or sleeveless shirts was to be admitted into the church building.

An American sense of rights and freedom rebels against such rules, calling them absurdities. Yet it was done and it was enforced. Tourists who had traveled across an ocean to see a church were turned back at the door unless they were properly attired. This was only to visit a church while no other liturgical action was going on. The Holy Father saw a need to institute a policy aimed at restoring, in a very concrete way, a proper sense of reverence for the house of God.

I have often heard the argument that administrators of churches should be pleased to see that people come, regardless of how they are dressed. The other side of that is that people need to demonstrate in word and deed the proper disposition and attitude. I am certain the American people would be rightfully chagrined if the guard at the Tomb of the Unknown Soldier were to show up in plaid shorts, a tank top and half-laced tennis shoes. It is hard to imagine that he could have a proper interior attitude to the job at hand were he to come to "work" dressed like that.



Our liturgy is a sacred “work”. How we come to that work is probably as important as the fact that we come. We must recognize that we come to church for sacred work, sacred worship. This demands a decorum commensurate with the dignity of the work to be done. Even if that “work” is to utter a private prayer, it still demands an appropriate decorum.

The soldiers at Arlington know the sacredness of the work which they do. Their dress, their demeanor, their discipline all speak of their recognition of that sacredness. Seeing them is a source of pride for me.

I am proud of what they represent, proud of the values which their discipline bespeaks, proud of the country which at heart still knows that honor and fidelity are worth defending.

For these values people live, and for these values people give their lives. The dress and demeanor of these troops says that they truly honor and respect the life and death of those represented at the Tomb of the Unknown.

Catholics likewise need to know the sacredness of the liturgical “work” which they do. Their dress, their demeanor, their discipline, ought to speak of their recognition of that sacredness.

Seeing the dress and demeanor of Catholics in Church ought to be a source of pride. They ought to manifest a genuine respect for Jesus present, as well as for the values of the Catholic Church. For these values, saints, declared and not declared, gave their lives; for these values each Catholic must be willing to dress in a fashion which shows recognition and respect.

*Bishop Vasa, a native of Lincoln, Nebraska, was made bishop of the Diocese of Baker, Oregon, in 1999. This essay originally appeared in the Catholic Sentinel June 30, 2000. It is reprinted with permission.*

## Turn off cell phones to avoid distractions in church

“There are still many people who don’t understand that being at Mass is sharing a moment with God.”

If it is absolutely necessary that you have your cell phone and that it remain on, shut off the ringtone and set it to “vibrate” instead.

If you absolutely must take a call in Church - whether during liturgy or not - whisper your initial greeting, but do not continue the conversation until you are safely outdoors or in a social area where you will be a distraction to no one.



## Prayers to the Holy Spirit

**LET US ALWAYS START ALL OUR PRAYER WITH A SIMPLE**

**“COME, HOLY SPIRIT”**

*“Holy Spirit, give me courage to fight the evil I must battle today.”*

### Prayer to the Holy Spirit In favor of the Church

O Holy Spirit, Creator, be propitious to the Catholic Church; by Your heavenly power make it strong and secure against the attacks of its enemies, and renew in charity and grace the spirit of Your servants whom you have anointed, that they may glorify You and the Father and His only-begotten Son, Jesus Christ Our Lord. Amen.

## CHRISTIANITY

In the home it is kindness;  
In the business it is honesty;  
In society it is courtesy;  
In work it is fairness;  
Toward the unfortunate it is sympathy;  
Toward the weak it is help;  
Toward the wicked it is resistance;  
Toward the strong it is trust;  
Toward the penitent it is forgiveness;  
Toward the successful it is congratulation;  
And toward God it is reverence and obedience.

### Prayer for Pope Francis

Holy Spirit, source of all gifts, give to Your shepherd, the Pope, a spirit of courage and right judgment, a Spirit of knowledge and love.

Holy Spirit help Your Pope to govern with fidelity those entrusted to his care. May he, as successor to the apostle Peter and vicar of Christ, build Your Church into a sacrament of unity, love, and peace for all the world.



# LOVE IS OUR MISSION

## Extraordinary Jubilee Year of Mercy

**December 8, 2015 - November 16, 2016**

The theme of Pope Francis' historic visit to the United States was "Love is Our Mission." His declaration that the coming year would be declared an Extraordinary Jubilee Year of Mercy has been in the news. His message to promote dialogue amid conflict, action in the face of inertia and hope in the face of despair reached Catholics and people of other faiths. Pope Francis has said, "I have asked the Church in this Jubilee Year to rediscover the richness encompassed by the spiritual and corporal works of mercy. The experience of mercy, indeed, becomes visible in the witness of concrete signs as Jesus himself taught us. Each time that one of the faithful personally performs one or more of these actions, he or she shall surely obtain the Jubilee Indulgence."

"It is indeed my wish that the Jubilee be a living experience of the closeness of the Father, whose tenderness is almost tangible, so that the faith of every believer may be strengthened and thus testimony to it be ever more effective."

During the blessed year, the Jubilee Indulgence will be granted in Rome's basilicas and in sanctuaries and the cathedrals of the various dioceses, but also in all prison chapels around the world and specially designated pilgrimage sites. The Franciscan Friars of the Atonement will be holding events throughout the year to focus on bringing mercy and atonement to the world. The Jubilee Year of Mercy is not just about personal absolution from our own sins, but is a way to discover the grace and beauty of our faith's spiritual and corporal acts of mercy by practicing them each day.

Graymoor hopes to be identified as a pilgrimage site by the Archdiocese of NY. Visitors who come to Graymoor to pray, attend Mass or participate with the Friars in spiritual activities such as the Stations of the Cross may receive a Jubilee Indulgence. With Graymoor's special connection to reconciliation, healing and

atonement, the Friars and Sisters of Graymoor invite all to share in this Jubilee Year of Mercy, through pilgrimage, and participation in the sacraments of reconciliation and Mass, retreats and prayer services at Graymoor.

During this Year of Mercy, there are ways we can focus on God's loving mercy. The Corporal Works of Mercy are acts of kindness that can help others with physical and material needs, whether you are spending time at a food bank or community garden to feed the hungry or help the homeless; donating your gently used clothing to Graymoor's thrift store or your local parish shop; supporting a ministry that visits prisoners or attending a wake and bringing a Mass card and praying for the deceased. There are many ways that our faith gives us to bring mercy to the world that needs healing.

Let's not forget our call for performing Spiritual Works of Mercy as well, those gentle acts of kindness that allow us to try to help others with their spiritual and emotional needs. We conduct spiritual works of mercy by instructing others about our Catholic faith, sharing our skills and insights about our faith with others, advising them and faithfully living the values of the Gospel and intervening in situations where people are clearly harming themselves or others. Other Spiritual Works of Mercy can be setting a good example - responding positively when presented with a negative or prejudicial remark, refusing to spread gossip, consoling those who are hurt or grieving, and avoiding cynicism by spreading hope. You can experience spiritual works of mercy by forgiving and praying for those who have wronged you, asking others to forgive you and letting go of grudges.

The Jubilee Year of Mercy reminds us to be *Merciful Like the Father* and to bring Mercy and Atonement to our homes, our work and our world. You can join the Friars at Graymoor for activities throughout the year, participate in a Franciscan Pilgrimage to Rome, Assisi and Padua, and visit our Facebook page for reflections on Mercy. Visit [AtonementFriars.org/YearofMercy](http://AtonementFriars.org/YearofMercy) for more information and updates.

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from Franciscan Friars of the Atonement  
Graymoor 1-800-338-2620*



### *Prayer To Saint Anthony of Padua*

*Come, Saint Anthony: You have been Gifted by God with the power to find that which is lost.*

*I ask that you find lost souls, souls that Jesus shed His blood to save, and return them to the Father, their rightful owner, so they can praise Him forever.*

*I also pray for.* \_\_\_\_\_

*Thank you for hearing my prayer.*

*Blessed Virgin Mary, Mother of lost souls, intercede for us.*

*Amen*

*Come, Holy Spirit. I ask that you receive the souls that St. Anthony has found and will find, so they will know the joy of union with the Father, Jesus and You, Holy Spirit, in this life and in the life to come. Amen*

## PRAYER TO SAINT ANTHONY

O HOLY SAINT ANTHONY, gentlest of Saints, your love for God and charity for His creatures made you worthy when on earth to possess miraculous powers. Miracles waited on your word, which you were ever ready to speak for those in trouble or anxiety. Encouraged by this thought, I implore you to obtain for me...(Here mention your request.) The answer to my prayer may require a miracle; even so, you are the Saint of Miracles. O gentle and loving Saint Anthony, whose heart was ever full of human sympathy, whisper my petition into the ears of the sweet Infant Jesus, who loved to be folded in your arms, and the gratitude of my heart will ever be yours. Amen.

*St. Anthony of Padua is invoked in a wide variety of needs but is especially renowned as the "Patron of Lost Objects."*

## PRAYER FOR RESPECT OF LIFE

Almighty Father, you are the generous creator of life.

During this Year of Mercy we ask that through the loving graces of the passion and death of Jesus, Your Son,

You intervene and hear our prayers to end abortion, to bring about a greater respect for life, to protect the unborn, the elderly and all who are vulnerable.

O Lord, we pray especially for mothers and fathers who are grieving the loss of their child in the womb.

Give them new hope.

Reveal your love for them.

May the prayers of Mary help us.

We pray through Christ, our Lord.

Amen.

*Pray for us, O Holy Mother of God, that we may be made worthy of the promises of Christ.*



## AS THE FATHER GIVES US MERCY WE CAN GIVE MERCY TO OTHERS

**SPIRITUAL WORKS OF MERCY.** The traditional seven forms of Christian charity in favor of the soul or spirit of one's neighbor, in contrast with the corporal works of mercy that minister to people's bodily needs. They are: converting the sinner, instructing the ignorant, counseling the doubtful, comforting the sorrowful, bearing wrongs patiently, forgiving injuries, and praying for the living and the dead. Their basis is the teaching of Christ and the practice of the Church since apostolic times.

**CORPORAL WORKS OF MERCY.** The seven practices of charity, based on Christ's prediction of the Last Judgment (Matthew 5:3-10) that will determine each person's final destiny. They are: 1. to feed the hungry; 2. to give drink to the thirsty; 3. to clothe the naked; 4. to shelter the homeless; 5. to visit the sick; 6. to visit those in prison; and 7. to bury the dead.

*The Works of Mercy in the Catechism of the Catholic Church*

*The Catechism of the Catholic Church describes the corporal and spiritual works of mercy:*

The works of mercy are charitable actions by which we come to the aid of our neighbor in his spiritual and bodily necessities. Instructing, advising, consoling, comforting are spiritual works of mercy, as are forgiving and bearing wrongs patiently. The corporal works of mercy consist especially in feeding the hungry, sheltering the homeless, clothing the naked, visiting the sick and the imprisoned, and burying the dead. Among all these, giving alms to the poor is one of the chief witnesses to fraternal charity: it is also a work of justice pleasing to God. (2447)

Note that the section of the Catechism in which this text occurs is titled "Love for the Poor" (2443-49).

**The New Testament: "Blessed Are the Merciful, for They Shall Obtain Mercy" (Mt 5:7)**

In reflecting on the Scriptures and the merciful Father, we hear the words: "Go and do likewise." The Year of Mercy is not so much about attending programs but about imaging the compassion of God in the world. The spiritual and corporal works of mercy are very

important ways for us to imitate the Lord, learn from the Spirit and worship the Father. By visiting the sick, counseling the doubtful, praying for the living and the dead we open up to others the Father's compassion and mercy for them in their deep personal needs.

Feeding the hungry, clothing the naked, and caring for the material needs of those who suffer from want and lack in their lives assures those living in poverty and material depravation that the true God sees them, hears their cries and responds to them in times of want and crisis.

There is the temptation to restrict the Year of Mercy to receiving mercy in the sacrament of penance. In John 20, when Jesus sends the disciples as the Father has sent Him, he gives them the Holy Spirit and empowers them to lift the burden of sin from the world. This is not only the establishment of the sacrament of reconciliation, but also a mission to all disciples to be forgiving in their personal lives.

How many family quarrels disturb the harmony of family life because someone won't forgive an imposition or a slight? How many friendships dissolve because one or the other will not forgive? Grudges keep us prisoner and enslave us. God has called us to live in the freedom of the sons and daughters of God. The Year of Mercy invites us to wipe these divisions away and bring reconciliation and peace to our families and communities. The year invites us to take seriously the petition of the Lord's Prayer: "Forgive us our trespasses as we forgive those who trespass against us."

The Year of Mercy is necessary because it really is about the Christian way of life and the call to be a beacon of light and hope in the troubled circumstances of life. Truly, "in the tender compassion of our God, the dawn from on high has shone upon us." We may not bring universal peace by our small, personal manifestations of faith and faithfulness, but we can begin the process in the small world around us.

This is the real gift of the Year of Mercy - the challenge is to live the faith even in a violent and turbulent world where hatred and division is everywhere, and to witness to the world that, with the Lord, there is mercy and plenteous redemption.

*Father Earl Fernandes is dean of Mount St. Mary's Seminary and the Athenaeum of Ohio.*

## *Purgatory*

according to passages from the  
Diary of St. Maria Faustina Kowalska  
(1905-1938)

**“My mercy does not want this,  
but justice demands it.”**

...[The next night] I saw my Guardian Angel, who ordered me to follow him. In a moment I was in a misty place full of fire in which there was a great crowd of suffering souls. They were praying fervently, but to no avail, for themselves; only we can come to their aid. The flames which were burning them did not touch me at all. My Guardian Angel did not leave me for an instant. I asked these souls what their greatest suffering was. They answered me in one voice that their greatest torment was longing for God. I saw Our Lady visiting the souls in Purgatory. The souls call her “The Star of the Sea.” She brings them refreshment. I wanted to talk with them some more, but my Guardian Angel beckoned me to leave. We went out of that prison of suffering. [I heard an interior voice] which said, **My mercy does not want this, but justice demands it.** Since that time, I am in closer communion with the suffering souls. (Diary 20)

Once I was summoned to the judgement [seat] of God. I stood alone before the Lord. Jesus appeared such as we know Him during His Passion. After a moment, His wounds disappeared except for five, those in His Hands, His feet and His side. Suddenly I saw the complete condition of my soul as God sees it. I could clearly see all that is displeasing to God. I did not know that even the smallest transgressions will have to be accounted for. What a moment! Who can describe it? To stand before the Thrice-Holy God! Jesus asked me, **Who are you?** I answered “I am your servant, Lord.” **You are guilty of one day of fire in purgatory.** I wanted to throw myself immediately into the flames of purgatory, but Jesus stopped me and said, **Which do you prefer, suffer now for one day in purgatory or for a short while on earth?** I replied, “Jesus, I want to suffer in purgatory, and I want to suffer also the greatest pains on earth, even if it were to the end of the world.” Jesus said, **One [of the two] is enough; you will go back to earth, and there you will suffer much, but not for long; you will accomplish My will and My desires, and a faithful servant of Mine will help you do this. Now rest your head on My bosom, on My heart, and draw from it strength and power for these suffer-**

**ings, because you will find neither relief nor help nor comfort anywhere else. Know that you will have much, much to suffer, but don’t let this frighten you; I am with you.** (Diary 36)

One evening, one of the deceased sisters, who had already visited me a few times, appeared to me. The first time I had seen her, she had been in great suffering, and then gradually these sufferings had diminished; this time she was radiant with happiness, and she told me she was already in heaven ...And further, as a sign that she only now was in heaven, God would bless our house. Then she came closer to me, embraced me sincerely and said, “I must go now.” I understood how closely the three stages of a soul’s life are bound together; that is to say, life on earth, in purgatory and in heaven [the Communion of Saints]. (Diary 594)

After Vespers today, there was a procession to the cemetery. I could not go, because I was on duty at the gate. But that did not stop me at all from praying for the souls. As the procession was returning from the cemetery to the chapel, my soul felt the presence of many souls. I understood the great justice of God, how each one had to pay off the debt to the last cent. (Diary 1375)

## *Postscript*

One day, I saw two roads. One was broad, covered with sand and flowers, full of joy, music and all sorts of pleasures. People walked along it, dancing and enjoying themselves. They reached the end without realizing it. And at the end of the road there was a horrible precipice; that is, the abyss of hell. The souls fell blindly into it; as they walked, so they fell. And their number was so great that it was impossible to count them. And I saw the other road, or rather, a path, for it was narrow and strewn with thorns and rocks; and the people who walked along it had tears in their eyes, and all kinds of suffering befell them. Some fell down upon the rocks, but stood up immediately and went on. At the end of the road there was a magnificent garden filled with all sorts of happiness, and all these souls entered there. At the very first instant they forgot all their sufferings. (Diary 153)

*Excerpts from Diary of  
St. Maria Faustina Kowalska.*



# Confession: The Sacrament of Mercy

The Sacrament of Reconciliation is the sacrament of mercy. In the confessional, God freely offers his forgiveness to all who ask for it with a sincere heart and a genuine purpose of amendment. He requires no payment and no sacrifice; he took care of that himself long ago on Calvary. Instead, all God asks is that we show up. If we do our part, he does his.

During the year of mercy, Pope Francis has granted extraordinary powers to all priests to forgive sins that, in some places, are still reserved to the bishop, such as abortion. He also called for a special time of repentance during Lent. The initiative, 24 Hours for the Lord, will place special emphasis on the Sacrament of Reconciliation in dioceses around the world.

But the confessional isn't just for those who've been involved with abortion. The confessional is for every person who has broken faith with God in some way - who has yelled at their spouse, gossiped about a neighbor, skipped Mass on Sunday or wasted time at work. Which is to say, the confessional is for all of us.

We don't need to wait until Lent to pay it a visit. Every week, in almost every parish across America, priests sit in those confessionals, waiting for us to come and tell God that we're sorry. They know that when we do, we will, in the words of Pope Francis, "touch the grandeur of God's mercy with [our] own hands" and experience "true interior peace" (*Misericordiae Vultus*, No.17).

From Our Sunday Visitor Printed with permission

## From John 14: 19-29

19                   *Appearance to*  
                       *the Disciples*

On the evening of that first day of the week even though the disciples had locked the doors of the place where they were for fear of the Jews, Jesus came and stood before them. “Peace be with you,” he said.

20 When he had said this, he showed them his hands and his side. At the sight of the Lord the disciples rejoiced.

21 “Peace be with you,” he said again.  
“As the Father has sent me,  
so I send you.”

22 Then he breathed on them and said:  
“Receive the Holy Spirit.

23 If you forgive men’s sins,  
they are forgiven them;  
if you hold them bound,  
they are held bound.”

24 It happened that one of  
the Twelve, Thomas  
(the name means “Twin”),  
was absent when

25 Jesus came. The other disciples kept telling  
him: “We’ve seen the Lord!” His answer  
was, “I will never believe it with out probing  
the nail prints in his hands, without putting my  
finger in the nail marks and my hand into his  
side.”

26 A week later, the disciples were once more in  
the room, and this time Thomas was with them.  
Despite the locked doors, Jesus came and stood  
before them.

27 “Peace be with you,” he said; then, to Thomas:  
“Take your finger and examine my hands. Put  
28 your hand into my side. Do not persist in your  
unbelief, but believe!” Thomas said in response,  
29 My Lord and my God!” Jesus then said to him:

“You became a believer because you saw me. Blest are they who have not seen and have believed.”

**LORD LET YOUR MERCY BE ON US AS  
WE PLACE OUR TRUST IN YOU**

# TWO LETTERS FROM A PASTOR

A CHICAGO PRIEST WRITES TO HIS PARISHIONERS  
ABOUT REVERENCE FOR THE EUCHARIST - AND  
RECEIVES A SURPRISING RESPONSE.

**ST THOMAS OF CANTERBURY PARISH  
4827 NORTH KENMORE AVENUE  
CHICAGO, ILLINOIS 60640**

**June 24, 1997**

**To the parishioners of St. Thomas**

Dear Friends in the Lord,

I was alarmed by a statistic I heard this weekend. Only 27 percent of Catholics in the United States believe in the Real Presence. The doctrine of the Real Presence is at the very heart of the Catholic faith. The doctrine of the Real Presence is the belief that Jesus is really, physically, present in the form of bread and wine. This idea draws together all the central teachings of Christian faith. It is the incarnation, the redemption, the resurrection, the unity of the body of Christ, and the promise and foretaste of heaven. If we don't believe in the Real Presence, we might as well close the church.

In fact, we are facing a generation of young people who are largely lost to the Church because we have not given them the precious gift that is at the heart of Catholicism, that is the Real Presence of Jesus. Mass has become simply a drama, a vehicle for whatever agenda is currently popular. The church building is no longer a place of encounter with the Lord but a sort of social center - not a place of prayer, rather a place of chatter.

In many churches, including our own, the tabernacle was moved from the center of the church to add emphasis to the Mass and the presence of the Lord in the reception of Holy Communion. The experiment, however, has failed. We have lost the sense of the sacred that formerly was the hallmark of Catholic worship. The behavior of many in the church is outrageous. When Mass is over it is impossible to spend time in prayer. The noise level reaches the pitch that one would expect at a sporting event. The kiss of peace seems like New Year's eve. Christ

is forgotten on the altar.

You may counter that he is present in the gathering of the Church, and though this is true, it should not detract from the Lord present on the altar. If the Lord is truly recognized in the congregation, it should serve to enhance the sacredness of the moment. This is simply not happening. The sign of peace in most churches has all the sacredness of an Elks convention - no offense to the Elks. We are teaching our children by what we do and the way we are behaving that there is nothing special about that little white round thing, its just a piece of bread. Usually wedding photographers set up their equipment right in front of the tabernacle and I have to ask them to move. They have no idea what that little box is for. Worse still, I remember walking into church one afternoon to find some of the men of the parish smoking and drinking beer directly in front of the tabernacle as they worked on some "liturgical" project or other. After Mass on Sunday the church is littered with cigarette butts, gum, wrappers, the refuse of snacks, broken toys brought to entertain unruly children, and all matter of filth.

Therefore, I have decided to restore the tabernacle to its former place in the middle of the sanctuary and to begin a campaign of re-education as to the sacredness of worship and the meaning of the Real Presence. This means that I will nag and nag until a sense of the sacred is restored. I will be reminding you that a respectful quiet will have to be maintained in church. Food and toys and socializing are welcome elsewhere, but the church is the place for an encounter with the loving God. It will not be a popular policy, but this is unimportant.

If you object, please tell me why. I will not begin this change until July. Let me know what you think. I can hear one objection already. Where will the priest sit? I will sit where the priest has traditionally sat over on the side of the sanctuary. Here as in many churches the "presider's" chair was placed where the tabernacle had been. I am sick of sitting on the throne that should belong to my Lord. The dethronement of the Blessed Sacrament has resulted in the enthronement of the clergy, and I for one am sick of it. The Mass has become priest-centered. The celebrant is everything. I am sinner saved by grace as you are and not the center of the Eucharist. Let me resume my rightful place before the Lord rather than instead of the Lord. I am ordained to the priesthood of the Christ in the order of the presbyter, as such I do have a special and humbling role. I am elder brother in the Lord and



with you seek to follow Him and to worship.

Please, please let me return Christ to the center of our life together where he belongs.

In the Lord,  
Father Rich Simon

**ST THOMAS OF CANTERBURY PARISH**  
**4827 NORTH KENMORE AVENUE**  
**CHICAGO, ILLINOIS 60640**

**September 16, 1997**

**Dear Friends,**

You cannot imagine the response that I got to the letter I addressed to my parishioners on June 24. I have gotten so many calls and letters that I am reduced to saying thank you in a form letter. Still, I simply have to write to say thank you for your support and prayers. So many people thought I was brave to do what I did.

Brave!? I simply read the *Catechism* and moved a few pieces of furniture. The response has been overwhelmingly positive. In the parish, some people even wept for joy when they saw the change. I am still kicking myself and asking why I didn't do this years ago. The response has been so supportive. many wrote and expressed their sense of loneliness in the battle for Catholic orthodoxy. Well, you are not alone, neither among the laity nor the clergy.

Perhaps you have heard the definition of a neo-conservative: He is a liberal who has been mugged by reality. That certainly describes me. I was in college in the late 1960s and went the whole route-beard, sandals, protests, leafletting for feminism, and all the rest. I was nursed back to sanity by some Trappist monks and by genuinely Catholic charismatics. All my ministry has been in the inner city and mostly in the Hispanic apostolate. I teach in a seminary, part time, I am the diocesan liaison for Spanish-speaking prayer groups, and the pastor of an inner city parish. Our very poor parish in Chicago's Uptown gives away food and clothing about 4,000 times a month through a soup kitchen, a pantry, and a clothing room. We use six different languages in the liturgy: English, Spanish, Vietnamese, Lao, Korean; and we have a monthly Mass in the Coptic rite, in the Gheez language for the Eritean community. When I arrived here the parish was controlled by feminist and radical leftists. So I *had* pretty good liberal credentials.

My point in all of this, is that if a parish like this and a person like me can be turned from foolish liturgical experimentation, it can happen anywhere to anyone. Don't give up! For instance, if they have taken the kneelers out of your church, go to the front and kneel on the hard floor. You'll be amazed how many will join you. That's happened here. If your pastor tells you to stand, respectfully ask the bishop for permission to kneel. Let your light shine and pray unceasingly, and as you do, pray for me and my little parish of faithful poor. I have learned so much from them.

In the Lord,  
Father Rich Simon

*PS: I am enclosing a copy of the first letter. People have asked if they might share it or copy it. Please do! As Pilate said, "What I have written I have written." Should I be ashamed to hold the faith of two thousand years?*

***"My point in all of this, is that if a parish like this and a person like me can be turned from foolish liturgical experimentation, it can happen anywhere to anyone. Don't give up!"***

***The Holy Spirit comes as the Truth that overcomes all falsehood and the Love that overcomes all hatred. That is the God who dwells within us, the God of Truth and the God of Love.***

***Bishop Joseph McKinney***

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## Prayer to the Holy Spirit

Come, Holy Spirit, fill my heart with  
your holy gifts.

Let my weakness be penetrated with  
your strength this very day that I may  
fulfill the duties of my state in life con-  
scientiously, that I may do what is right  
and just.

Let my charity be such as to offend no  
one and hurt no one's feelings; so gener-  
ous as to pardon sincerely any wrong  
done to me.

Assist me in all the trials of life,  
enlighten me in my ignorance, advise me  
in my doubts, strengthen my weakness,  
help me in all needs and embarrassment,  
protect me in temptations and console me  
in all afflictions.

Graciously hear me, O Holy Spirit, and  
pour your light into my heart, my soul  
and my mind. Assist me to live a holy life  
and to grow in goodness and grace.

AMEN

Imprimatur: Samuel Cardinal Stritch  
Archbishop of Chicago

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