

16th Sunday OT Year A
July 18-19, 2020

Source and center of the Christian life.

Readings: Wisdom 12:13, 16-19; Romans 8:26-27; Matt 13: 24-30

Anyone who knowingly enters a church lacking air conditioning on a sultry July weekend understands the fundamentals of the spiritual life. We gather not for physical comfort—rather we seek to sow our spiritual lives with the good seed of faith, nourished by the Eucharist, that heavenly banquet to which we have been invited. This is one reason why the restrictions have been especially hard for our senior members, who for legitimate reasons are staying home. Your longing for the Bread of Life is a powerful witness to suffering and carrying your portion of the Cross.

Unworthy as we are, God calls us to participate in the Mass and to do so fruitfully, week after week, year after year, all throughout our lives. Sunday Mass is our constant amidst change, our spiritual lifeblood. By means of it, Jesus approaches and invites us to partake of a foretaste of heaven.

In God, mercy and tenderness exist alongside of justice and power. We enter here, not solely out of obligation, though we do recognize the very serious nature of the obligation to worship God on the Sabbath. We come out of love for the Lord, whom we worship in spirit and truth.

Shortly after the close of World War II 1947, Pope Pius XII wrote a landmark encyclical on the Sacred Liturgy entitled *Mediator Dei*. He highlighted the fundamental principle that liturgy is more than the sum of its actions, and it is so much more than merely an outward ceremony. He teaches that we are “to give interior effect to our outward observance.”¹

Pope Pius XII went on to describe the Mass as the chief act of divine worship, calling it “the source and center of Christian piety,”² a phrase quite similar to one used later at Vatican II and all too often quoted as if the idea originated at the Council.³ Pius XII paved the way for Vatican II.

¹ Pope Pius XII, *Mediator Dei*, 24 (Roman Missal, Secret for Thursday after the Second Sunday of Lent.

² Pope Pius XII, *Mediator Dei*, 2 “*Fons et centrum and praecipua action.*”

³ Vatican II, Dogmatic Constitution on the Church, *Lumen Gentium* 11, “source and summit of the Christian life”

In every age, we approach the holy Eucharist with awe and reverence. None of you is here today for outward appearances, but because you desire the spiritual good of your soul, and those of your family. Each and every Sunday, rain or shine, cold or heat, we present ourselves at the altar, worshipping almighty God as is our both our duty and privilege.

The Pope also added a helpful word of encouragement to us pastors:

Never think that you have satisfied your apostolic zeal until you see your faithful approach in great numbers the celestial banquet which is a sacrament of devotion, a sign of unity and a bond of love.⁴

He urged priests to remain vigilant about the liturgy, lest the enemy come and sow weeds all through the wheat, to quote from today's Gospel.

This is what is happening- the enemies of the Church have become emboldened. The desecrating of Catholic spaces, including fires, Satanic graffiti, decapitation of statues in Chattanooga, New Haven, Queens, Boston, Sacramento, and Ocala....these vicious acts ought to outrage all Catholics, for whom the Eucharist is the source and summit of our faith.

These are not merely attacks on the institution of the Catholic Church. They are a direct attack on the Lord- this is sacrilege and God's justice will not be lacking. Just today I read about a fire at the 15th century Cathedral of St. Peter and Paul in Nantes, situated on the Loire River in western France. Both the 400-year-old grand organ and a rose window were destroyed. Arson is suspected and the investigation continues.

If we have any chance of effectively witnessing to modern society, we must witness as though we truly believe the Eucharist is the source and center of our life. We must defend our churches and demand accountability for those who commit sacrilege to God's house or holy objects. We pray for a true conversion of the hearts of those who wish to terrorize us. Above all, we must seek to lead lives of virtue, showing others a better way.

⁴ Mediator Dei, paragraph # 201, itself quoting St. Augustine, Tract. 26 in John 13