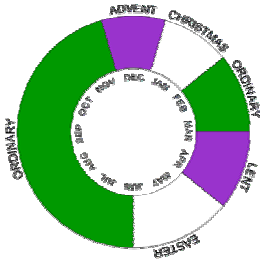


“The Canticle”



Easter/Pentecost 2005



Liturgical
Year
Calendar

We are in the Seasons of Easter & Pentecost

**“Be not afraid!
Go...and teach
all nations, baptizing them, In the name of...
✠ The Father
And of...**

**✠ The Son
And of...**

**✠ The Holy
Spirit!”**

“The Christian faith has not been tried and found wanting. It has been found difficult and left untried.” — G.K. Chesterton

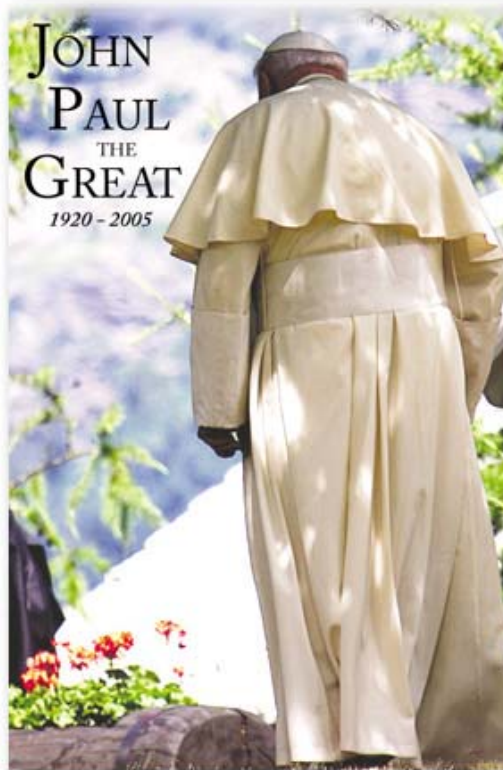
“In The Footsteps of Peter” - Papal Succession & The Legacy of John Paul II

By
Michael Cockrell
Editor-in-Chief

Be not afraid!” Three words which echoed the exhortation of Jesus to His Apostles cowering in the darkness of “the upper room” before being imbued with the “Holy Spirit and with fire” to evangelize and preach The Gospel, defined the life and legacy of John Paul II—arguably the greatest successor to “follow in the footsteps of St. Peter” since the beginning of the 20th century.

The shoes (or more properly for this Pope), the slippers of this fisherman will be difficult to fill.

John Paul II’s successor, once chosen, if not before, will be expected at minimum to embrace his legacy, not embarrass it; to nurture it; not nullify it and yet, at the same time, to preside over the Church’s most



ancient and sacred traditions and guide the faithful flock in his pastoral care of their immortal souls and their spiritual and temporal needs. The election process begins within 10 to 20 days following either the vacating of the “Throne of Peter” through voluntary abdication or more commonly, through death of a Pope.

As the saying goes, “Some

men are born great, others attain greatness and still others have greatness thrust upon them”

Most everyone who saw him and heard him; who talked with and walked with him, loved him and, most assuredly, will proclaim his greatness for years to come and will miss him.

Yet, our loss is Heaven’s gain.

“Well done, good and faithful servant!”

To which we can add a heartfelt, “AMEN!”

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"The Papal Conclave" Producing A Pope; Preserving The Process

By

Rev. Robert M. Blaney

Pastor; St. Francis Parish

As you read this, The Papal Conclave has done its solemn duty and has given us a new Pope. His name? Pope Benedict XVI. That name may not ring a bell (no pun intended) for most of us too young to remember another Pope who went by that name.

Perhaps this Pope is better known to the faithful as the former Joseph Cardinal Ratzinger, a close friend and confidant of the beloved John Paul II.

It's hard to conceive of a new shepherd for the Church after so many years of John Paul II. The length of his pontificate is a sign of God's abiding providential care. For that matter, the whole process of choosing the next successor of Peter speaks to us of God's desire for our well-being. In keeping with a tradition going back almost a thousand years, the cardinals of our Church (116 of them) celebrated Mass and then solemnly entered the conclave, which is Latin, meaning "with a key."

They are indeed locked in the famous Sistine Chapel until such a time as they elect a new pontiff.

Actually, Pope John Paul II reorganized the papal election process so that it was not so harsh on the cardinals. They actually stayed in a relatively new residence in Vatican City and were bused each day to the Sistine Chapel. However, they were not allowed any contact with the outside world and had no knowledge of any world events once the election began.

The happenings of the conclave are kept secret, but thanks to the modifications made by John Paul II and his embracing of the tools of modern communication in the service of the New Evangelization model he implemented, we were afforded an extended glimpse into the first actions of the conclave, which centered around each of the assembled cardinal swearing an oath of

profound secrecy under threat of excommunication to keep secret the process in which they were about to engage, as well as the results of their deliberations until a succes-



sor had been chosen by a two-thirds vote of those assembled

It is quite a serious obligation, the choosing of a pope — and the car-

dinal electors appreciated its gravity. They were to vote four times a day; two ballots in the morning, and two in the afternoon. Keeping with custom, they deliberated over the needs of the Church, but not over specific candidates. Each cardinal then wrote

"We believe that the Holy Spirit guides the cardinals to choose the best candidate, through whom Christ, The Good Shepherd, continues to care for the people entrusted to him."

the name of his choice on a ballot, and then one by one approached The Sistine Chapel's altar where he deposited his ballot into a chalice, while uttering a prayer to the Holy Spirit. Three cardinals were chosen to count the ballots.

If a two-thirds majority were not achieved for any one person, the ballots were sewn together and were thrown into a fire with chemicals to make the smoke black, indicating to the world that the round of voting had not produced a pope.

If however, as in this election, at least two thirds of the ballots were for one candidate, the cardinal who received the votes was asked if he was willing to serve the Church as Universal Pastor.

If he said yes, he was then asked how he wished to be called, at which time he chooses his new Papal name. The ballots were then sewn together and thrown into the stove with chemicals to make the smoke white indicating to the world that a pope has been elected. Pope John Paul also instructed the cardinals to ring the bells of St. Peter's, just in case the smoke goes unseen and the cardinals can't get out!

Shortly thereafter, the vicar for Rome came to the balcony of St. Peter's and cried out to the world the words we waited to hear: "Habemus Papam!" We have a Pope! The vicar introduced the man elected. The new Holy Father then appeared on the balcony and gave his first "Urbi et Orbi" blessing (to the city and to the world). His formal installation took place within a few days of the election.

Papal selection is a process rich in imagery, history and tradition.

Above all, though, it is a time of intense prayer asking for the graces of the Holy Spirit.

We believe that the Holy Spirit guides the cardinals to choose the best candidate, through whom Christ the Good Shepherd continues to care for the people entrusted to him.

It was providential that this process coincided with Good Shepherd Sunday.

Each year on the fourth Sunday of Easter, the Gospel reading comes from the tenth chapter of John in which Jesus uses the image of a shepherd and sheep to describe his mission. Certainly an appropriate time to be choosing a new Pope.

"The Canticle"

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Published quarterly with additional supplements during Christmas and Easter



“Habemus Papam”

By

Michael Cockrell

Editor-in-Chief

In English it means, “We Have A Pope!”

And, coincidentally, because of that announcement, I have a column!

Actually, I had a different one in mind, but this column has undergone numerous revisions regarding its scope and content.

It was suggested that I write a “primer” of sorts regarding the history and procedures of the Papal election process. Not a bad idea, but I wanted it to be less of a procedural treatment.

Although it might sound like an apology to some, I felt I needed to wait for the election of our new Pope to write this column. After all, this is a newsletter. It should as often as possible, contain news, that is at once timely and enduring. Kind of like the process about which I am now writing.

It was a matter of having too much to try and capsulize and make people aware and appreciative of regarding process that has been passed down, with a tradition and a continuity so rich and faithful to the intent of Christ’s mission, as to be unquestionably sanctified and sanctioned with the help of Heaven.

I also wanted to pay tribute to John Paul II, and so, I opted to put a tribute of sorts on the front page to honor his memory.

I also thought that the picture of John Paul II was especially poignant.

I only wish that I had produced that photo, but it appeared on the front page of “The Pittsburgh Catholic” by a photographer who has created an image that is immediately engaging and perpetually memorable, again

like my desire for this column.

It is human nature, when we lose someone who has had such a tremendous impact on the world as John Paul II did for so many, for so long, to wonder if there will ever be another Pope like him. It will be posterity’s role to provide the answer. John Paul II in life and death was an unambiguous reflection of Christ and His mission on Earth.

It reminds me of the passage wherein Christ tells His disciples that He is going away for a little while, but that he will not abandon them; nor leave them as orphans.

Rather, He will send His Advocate, The Holy Spirit, to strengthen and encourage them in their mission to spread The Gospel.

It is therefore hardly suprising that prior to the election of a new Pope, The College of Cardinals, convened for that most solemn process, prays to and depends on the intercession of The Holy Spirit to guide and bless their deliberations and ultimate choice of the one who will be acting “In Persona Christi” (In the person of Christ).

Because when you are emulating Christ on Earth, your words and actions should be completely reflective of Him.

And Christ specifically conferred on Peter, the first Pope, the primary shepherd of His Church on Earth, the authority that up to that point, only He himself possessed: To hold the keys to The Kingdom, of Life and Death and Heaven and Hell. To forgive or retain sins and their punishments; to ordain clergy; restrain heretical dogmas; and a host

of other capabilities, rights and responsibilities applying to the flock he was to shepherd.

The care of that flock is now in the strong and capable hands of John Paul II’s “right-hand man” Joseph Cardinal Ratzinger, now known to history as Pope Benedict The Sixteenth, who, it is surmised, was selected as a “transitional” Pope to shepherd a church which, according to prevailing conventional wisdom, is also undergoing a transition to a more “enlightened; less “didactic” (morally instructive) entity in the modern world.

As is often the case, however, conventional wisdom is rarely conventional or else it would be more widely embraced, nor is it in this case “wisdom” since the book of Wisdom first admonishes its seeker, “Fear of the Lord is the beginning of Wisdom!”

Since those who claim such wisdom have their own notions based on human desires; not those of the Holy Spirit; nor do they fear the flouting of God’s laws in acquiescence to popular whim, I suspect they are in for a big surprise with our newly-elected Pontiff who has shown and spoken of his intent to carry on the work and mission of his predecessors, both ancient and recent in an unbroken, uncompromising allegiance to Christ and His Church on Earth.

Yes, indeed, “*Habemus Papam*” — “*We have a Pope!*”

“*Deo gratias! Viva Il Papa!*” —

Thanks be to God! Long Live The Pope!



Saints' Corner

The Blessed Virgin Mary

"Queen of All Saints"

The Mother of God holds a special place in Catholic hearts and homes.

We look to her as our model and also as our heavenly mother.

To honor Mary, display a picture or statue of her in your home.

There is a wide variety of images to choose from: Our Lady of Perpetual Help, Our Lady of Guadalupe, Our Lady of Lourdes, Our Lady of Fatima, and so on.

Some of Mary's feasts are the following:

January 1 Solemnity of Mary, Mother of God

February 2 Presentation of the Lord

March 25 Annunciation of the Lord

May 31 Visitation of Mary to Elizabeth

July 16 Our Lady of Mount Carmel

August 15 Assumption of Mary into heaven

August 22 Queenship of Mary

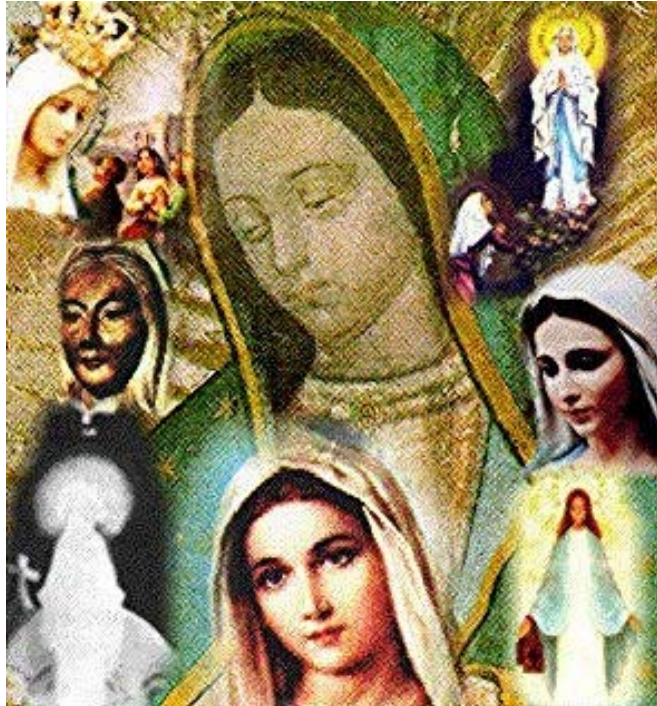
September 8 Birth of Mary

October 7 Our Lady of the Rosary

December 8 Immaculate Conception of Mary

December 12 Our Lady of Guadalupe

December 25 Nativity of Our Lord



On these days put Mary's image in a place of honor and set flowers and a candle near it.

Mary Candle—A large white candle marked with an M and decorated with a blue ribbon. Set it on your dining room table on Mary's feast days.

May Altar—During May, which is Mary's month, set up a May "altar" in your house, using a pretty blue cloth, a candle, and fresh flowers. Crown your statue of Mary.

Marian Prayers—Teach your children not only the Hail Mary but also other favorite prayers to Mary, such as the Angelus, the Memorare, the Magnificat, and the Litany of Loreto, in which we call upon Mary using various titles given her.

The Rosary—Each day, or at least once a week, pray together as a family the Hail Mary, or a decade of the rosary, if not the entire rosary. Make this your custom especially during October, the month of the rosary, and May, the month of Mary.

Talk about Mary—Talk to your children about Mary, her life as narrated in the gospels, her appearances on earth, and why we honor her. Above all, encourage your children to imitate Mary who is the first and best disciple of Jesus. Your example is the most effective encouragement. —Sr. Mary Kathleen Glavich, SND

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Kathy's Column

Kathy Long
Director of Religious Education &
Pastoral Associate



“Generations of Faith”

Festivals Update

I am very pleased to report that over 700 people have attended our faith festival celebrating the Passion of Christ and that over 350 children have been introduced to and prayed the Stations of the Cross. At the faith festivals the children were able to learn about an aspect of our faith that cannot be presented in the regular classroom setting. Each faith festival is for a period of approximately 90 minutes. During that time we plan activities that will impact every age group present. Every moment of each festival is not geared toward children but takes into account that people of all ages are attending. Some time is directed to our teens and some time is directed to the adults but every age group will have some aspect of every festival directed toward them. It is our hope that children and adults will discuss the program together and thereby share their faith and grow in

faith together. The reason behind generations of faith is to take our faith out of the classroom and into our homes. It is to support parents in their role as the primary and most important educators in the faith of their children. The goal of generations of faith is to help all of us grow in discipleship and become more like Jesus Christ. I welcome all of your feedback on the faith festivals. Please call or email me: klong@saintfrancis.net with any comments that you have.

Mark your calendars—May 22nd and May 26 are the last Faith Festivals of the year. Please call the office to save your place. If you have not had an opportunity to come to one of our Faith Festivals try this one. We will share Mass, a meal, a dramatic presentation, and separate classes for children and adults on the Sacrament of Eucharist.

Let's walk together on the Road to Emmaus where the disciples eyes were open to the presences of Jesus in the breaking

of the bread.



I want to remind everyone about Vacation Bible School which will take place July 11th to July 15th from 9 a.m. until noon.

We will be “traveling “ the Serengeti of Africa to learn more about God and His awesome love for us. Registration forms for this “Serengeti Safari” are available now in the Parish office.

Since space limits us to eighty (80) children, it is important that you register early to reserve your spot!

And while you're at it, if you can help as a teacher, decorator, or counselor, you can let us know that at the same time you come in to pick up your registration forms!



“Wise Beyond Their Years”

This past school year I had the pleasure of teaching 10 students in our junior high program.

I wanted to have an opportunity to really get to know a group of kids before they entered our Confirmation program and I enjoyed doing just that.

On the last day of class I decided to ask them what they thought about coming to religious ed classes and what they thought about being Catholic.

I would like to share some of our amazing conversation with you to let you know what wonderful, caring and faith filled kids we have in our parish. I have listed some of their comments below:

..”We like the Catholic Church and what it stands for, teaching us about how to be good in life and love God.”

“..I like coming to class. Sometimes it is hard to leave what I am doing but I am always glad when they got here.”

“...If you believe in God you can make it in life. Life can be hard at times and you need God by your side to help you do the right things and make good choices and to know someone is always with you when you feel down.”

“... There are people you can talk to here at St. Francis about our problems and people who can help us make the right decisions.”

“What things do you like about being Catholic?”

...I like that I can pray any time I want to

.. I enjoy that Mass is always the same

and I know what to expect.

..I like how the Church celebrates Holy days and where everyone just meets to celebrate those holy days together.

.. You know you are always welcome.

.. I notice some people only come twice a year—I think you should come every week. Sometimes people just get lazy. Coming to church is a habit and a good one.

As you can see from our conversation I had a very good year with these eighth graders. Thank you for sharing your precious children with me. They renew my faith!!!!

Remember to sign up for religious education classes by July 1st for the discount. We have many people signed up for the summer classes.

And don't forget Vacation Bible School. We will be traveling to Africa... Where kids are wild about GOD!! —**KL**

CALENDAR OF EVENTS AND RELIGIOUS EDUCATION SCHEDULE

MAY 2005						
SUNDAY	MONDAY	TUESDAY	WEDNESDAY	THURSDAY	FRIDAY	SATURDAY
1 Catechist Retreat 4:00pm-8:00pm	2 Adoration 9:30 a.m.-6:00 p.m. Bereavement Support Group 7:00pm	3	4 First Communion Rehearsal 6:00-7:00pm	5	6	7 First Communion 11:00am
8 Crowning of Mary 10am Mass	9 Adoration 9:30 a.m.-6:00 p.m.	10	11	12	13 Wine Tasting Party 7:00pm	14 10th grade Retreat 8:00am-6:30pm
15 Pentecost Peer Leaders' Meeting 5:00pm Images of Mary	16 Adoration 9:30 a.m.-6:00 p.m. Bereavement Support Group 7:00pm	17 Faith Forum 7-9 pm	18 Speaker Fr. Dave O'Leary End of Life Issues 7pm	19	20	21
22 GOF Corpus Christi 10:00am-1:00pm	23 Adoration 9:30 a.m.-6:00 p.m.	24	25 S.M.A.R.T Program 10am	26 GOF Corpus Christi 5:30pm-7:30pm	27	28
29	30 Adoration 9:30 a.m.-6:00 p.m. Memorial Day	31				

JUNE 2005						
SUNDAY	MONDAY	TUESDAY	WEDNESDAY	THURSDAY	FRIDAY	SATURDAY
			1 10th Grade Retreat 8am.-6:30pm S.M.A.R.T Program 10am	2	3	4 Little Sisters of The Poor—4pm 10th Grade Retreat
5 "Little Sisters of The Poor" All Masses	6 Adoration 9:30 a.m.-6:00 p.m.	7 "The Church Visible: What Is The Church?"	8 S.M.A.R.T Program 10am	9	10	11
12	13 Adoration 9:30 a.m.-6:00 p.m.	14 "The Church Visible: What Is The Church?" 7p.m.	15 S.M.A.R.T Program 10am	16	17 Young Couples Social Parish Hall 7-10p.m.	18
19	20 Adoration 9:30 a.m.-6:00 p.m.	21 "The Church Visible: What Is The Church?" 7p.m.	22 Altar Server Appreciation Day S.M.A.R.T Program 10am	23 "A Mid-Summer Night's Nativity" Mass at Sunset	24 Fr. Gagnon's 60th Anniversary of Priesthood Mass & Party 6p.m. — ??	25
26	27 Adoration 9:30 a.m.-6:00 p.m.	28	29	30		

CALENDAR OF EVENTS AND RELIGIOUS EDUCATION SCHEDULE

JULY 2005						
SUNDAY	MONDAY	TUESDAY	WEDNESDAY	THURSDAY	FRIDAY	SATURDAY
					1	2
3	4 Adoration 9:30 a.m.-6:00 p.m.	5	6	7	8	9
10	11 Adoration 9:30 a.m.-6:00 p.m. Vacation Bible School Begins	12	13	14	15 → Vacation Bible School Ends	16
17	18 Adoration 9:30 a.m.-6:00 p.m. Summer Religious Education Pro- gram Begins (Grades 3-6 only)	19	20	21	22 →	23
24	25 Adoration 9:30 a.m.-6:00 p.m.	26	27	28	29 Summer Reli- gious Education Program Ends → (Grades 3-6 only)	30
31						

AUGUST 2005						
SUNDAY	MONDAY	TUESDAY	WEDNESDAY	THURSDAY	FRIDAY	SATURDAY
	1 Adoration 9:30 a.m.-6:00 p.m.	2	3	4	6	7
8	9 Adoration 9:30 a.m.-6:00 p.m.	10	11	12	13	14
15	16 Adoration 9:30 a.m.-6:00 p.m.	17	18	19	20	21
22	23 Adoration 9:30 a.m.-6:00 p.m.	24	25	26	27	28
29	30 Adoration 9:30 a.m.-6:00 p.m.	31				

Pam Stenzel Reaching Out To Our Teens

By Debbie Hovanasian



Deb Hovanasian is a parishioner of Saint Francis Parish who serves on the parish's Pastoral Council and, in her other life, writes on religious topics for the Lowell Sun. –The Editors



Teens are required to sit through many classes, discussions and presentations – most of which will not have a life-changing impact. But Pam Stenzel, teen counselor, psychologist, author, guest on television/radio programs and mother of three, has a message that is so powerful that it does change lives -- and may even save some.

The Confirmation students of St. Francis and St. Marguerite D'Youville parishes were recently required to attend a presentation by Stenzel, author of "Sex Has a Price Tag," at St. Louis Church.

Without the use of fancy graphics, slides or video, Stenzel powerfully delivered the message that sex outside of God's boundaries is behavior that has far-reaching consequences.

With a unique ability to relate directly to the teens and speak their language, Stenzel's drive to reach out to our young people at risk in today's sexual culture was rewarded with an audience of hundreds that remained riveted for more than an hour.

Stenzel delivered sobering statistics

on STD's (sexually transmitted diseases) – now more of a consequence of teen sexual activity than an unwanted pregnancy. In fact, those on birth control pills to prevent pregnancy, she said, are more at risk because they are four times more likely to contract an STD.

How serious is the problem? Very serious! Especially when you consider that in just one day, 14,000 people will contract an STD (many of whom will be teens).

In the 1950's there were five STD's, in 2005 over 30, 30% of which are incurable, she said.

One out of four teens already has an STD, yet some are not even aware of it. Stenzel stressed that any girl who is sexually active should be tested every six months. Even with that, they may be scarred for life.



Pam Stenzel

Most disconcerting is the Human Papillomavirus (HPV), the #1 cause of cervical cancer. 50% of teen girls who are sexually active are already infected with at least one strain of HPV, Stenzel said, adding that today 19-year-olds are requiring hysterectomies.

Her message to the girls in the audience was clear: In today's society, sexual activity outside of marriage could likely result in the inability to have children.

To the boys, Stenzel stressed that STD's can remain for life; viral STD's are not curable. She also presented the difficulties of being a teen father and the financial impact of support that lasts a lifetime.

Amid the horrific statistics of STD's, however, Stenzel offered encouragement and proof that the pendulum is swinging.

"To the virgins out there, you are not alone!" she shouted. "There are now more virgins in high school than in 15 years because people are realizing that the price is too high."

Admitting that she cannot choose for them, "My prayer is that you would choose life...trust your creator, not MTV," Stenzel advised with much emotion. "I don't care what you did before you walked in the door; I care what you do when you walk out."

With that, Stenzel exited down the long aisle of the church to a standing ovation and grateful applause from students, teachers, parents and grandparents.

And while no one can accurately predict at this time the impact that Stenzel had on this group of teens, there was a tremendous confidence among the adults in the room that most walked away "getting it" – that her powerful message will stay with them, affecting their future decisions and ultimately their lives.

For more information, visit www.pamstenzel.com.

Traditions of Our Faith - The "True Presence"

As Catholics, one of the tenets (accepted truths) of our shared faith is something called the Doctrine of "The True Presence!" This doctrine unerringly declares that at The Consecration, the Bread and Wine undergoes what is known as a "transubstantiation" to really and substantially become The Body & Blood, of Our Lord, Jesus Christ. The outward appearance of the bread and wine does not change, nor does our outward appearance change as a result of our reception of it, but the change that occurs invisibly within transforms us in a way just as profound.





A View From The Pew: *"My Experience Becoming a Confirmed Catholic"*

By
Kelly Ash

One of my favorite stories is the Road to Emmaus account [where Peter and Cleophas conversed unknowingly with the Risen Jesus], probably because I always felt that I was traveling on that road.

After being Confirmed at the Easter Vigil and hearing that story again this past weekend, it now has more meaning.

I now feel that I am traveling in the right direction. I've always had faith, had my beliefs, but that story always just brings life into perspective.

At one of the last RCIA classes, someone said, "so

this is it, we're done." I thought out loud, "No, it's just beginning."

Unfortunately, our classes together have ended, but the learning process is a continuing journey into our faith.

In addition to the memories and learning that I have obtained through the RCIA program, I also have gained memories from the Sunday Mass Scrutinies.

My most treasured Mass was the one that Father Blaney invited all of the children to the front to welcome me and say the Lord's Prayer.

That was such a beautiful moment that I will hold dear

forever.

The warm welcome from Saint Francis Parish that I received was overwhelming.

I would like to thank everyone, especially Jackie Carr.

I know that some weeks we had to "wing it" at the last minute, but it always worked out; Auntie Joyce and Matt, without your love and guidance I probably would have never made it; My children, Lauryn and Nathyn, who inspire me every day.

Most especially, I would like to thank Father Blaney, whose special way of being an pastor and friend go hand in hand.

Thank you and God Bless!

✠ **FAITH Forum** ✠

Do you have questions about our faith? Do you know any alienated, inactive, divorced angry, or remarried Catholics? If you or someone you know are drifting away from the church; have been hurt by the Church; or are angry because of their Catholic experience, please invite them to come and talk with us on Tuesday, May 17th at 9 pm in the "St. Dominic" room. Consider making time in your schedule for this interesting and informative meeting!!!!

“Zeal for The Eucharist”

By

Michael Cockrell

(Editor’s Note: In the Lent/Easter edition of The Canticle, I wrote about a discussion I had with a girl about practicing our Catholic faith and being zealous about doing so.

Since The Holy Eucharist is central to our full participation and understanding of why we participate at Mass, the conversation continued and turned to focus on what we have come to know and appreciate as the “source and summit” of our unity and community of believers. Namely, The Holy Eucharist!

That conversation, edited for space, is reproduced below! —MKC) ...

As to your next comment that you “have no zeal of the religious kind,” I would ask if you can identify for me what you DO have zeal for and why?

Without knowing specifically what you’re zealous about, I would speculate that what you’re enthusiastic about and gives you joy or pleasure are the things that someone your age would want and continue to do, that come easy to you...

It is human nature that we look for the things that we enjoy and don’t get engaged by those things we don’t enjoy or are difficult. Doing what is right is never easy! Otherwise, everyone would be doing it!

...How could doing something for God and, ultimately, your soul be unpleasant especially when it makes you more holy, more open to what God is saying, and an example for others to see how the world could be a better place through you?

Religion (Your Catholic faith and traditions) is not just “a thing” to do; it is the ONLY thing to do, as a way to God, which has stood the test of time; for which stronger, more valiant, more devout souls than you or I have willingly sacrificed their very LIVES in its defense; to the scorn of the world which thinks it folly that they should have done so!

Now THAT is ZEAL...when you care so much about your beliefs that you are willing to die in defense and protection of them!

Do you have anything in your life worth that much to you? It’s not a trick question, but think before you answer, because there may come a time when your answer is a life or death decision and you’ll want to be ready since you may not be given the time to weigh the options!

Sounds suspiciously like some people you might have heard about in Church, had you been listening as well there as you are willing to listen to me here! Christ was living proof of that zeal, right?

He practiced what he preached.

He went to synagogue; did what was right; what was expected of him, and then some!

And, when, as an adult, which in Jesus’ time was at the ripe “old” age of thirteen (two years younger than you), when praying and going to ‘church’ was supposedly out of duty or for appearance sake as demonstrated by the Pharisees, Jesus called them hypocrites!

I don’t think that is what you are, nor what you want to be!

Rather, when at Mass, ask God, and His Son, to help you focus not just on what is important for the hour you’re at His House, but for what is important to take with you when you leave!

His Son hung on a Cross for three hours for you and me and every person yet unborn.

I think you could find it in your heart to sit in a pew for one-third as long, and use that as an explanation to justify being there if you absolutely feel you need it! You would do as much for a friend on Earth! Wouldn’t you? Can you do less for God?

Consider that notion, when you, as we all, me included, are at times distracted by the world around us!

As Jesus drove the moneychangers from the temple, He said; “Zeal” for My Father’s House consumes Me!

At the age of twelve, he told his worried parents, who had lost track of him as they were returning home from a journey to Jerusalem and then found him...back in the temple, “Did you not know that I must be about My Father’s business?” He wasn’t talking there about carpentry!

How many times has a friend invited you to his or her house and you’ve repeatedly declined the invitation? Or, how many times have you forced yourself to go, when you didn’t really have the “zeal” (or desire, if you prefer) for going; went, didn’t listen to a single word they said to you, ate nothing nor drank what they offered?

Then after a painful, but dutiful period of time, you left disappointed complaining that you didn’t get anything out of the visit and thought, ‘If they weren’t my friend, I wouldn’t

have gone there in the first place?!”

If you don’t have a sense or “zeal,” for whatever reason, of what is really going on at Mass, remind yourself that you are hearing the inspired “Word of God” speaking to you in the readings, in words of wisdom and truth that are, like God, timeless in their scope and practicality for living a good and happy life, words spoken by prophets and people who ate and drank and lived with God on Earth in the person of Jesus! ... who invites you always to come to Him and especially invites you once a week to come to His House, listen to the words of His Father, the prophets, Himself, and His friends’ experiences with and without Him!

And above all, invites you to receive His Body and Blood truly present under the forms of bread and wine trans-substantiated at the Consecration!!

If you believe that, that alone should rivet your attention to what is going on, just as if Jesus walked up to your door, knocked, came in, and said “...I have a very special gift for you...I’m going to visit for as long as you want me to stay! It’s up to you, but you be sure and tell me when I’ve worn out my welcome and then I’ll go back to my home!”

Would you ever let Him out of your sight? I think NOT!

Very few people have a conversion experience like Saul (Paul, later, you know) whom God knocked off his horse and blinded temporarily.

In fact, many times in the Bible we hear of Jesus or the prophets going away by themselves for *quiet* interaction with God!

My point is, God doesn’t always scream at you to get your attention or “knock you off your horse.” Nor, do I think you really want God to get your attention that way. Do you?

Or, would you rather He tap you gently on the shoulder and whisper, “...My daughter, take this and eat, this is My Body which was given up for you and for all so that sins may be forgiven” and; ...My most precious creature created in my image, ‘Take this cup and drink from it, for this is the cup of My Blood, the blood of the new and everlasting covenant poured out for you and for all, so that sins may be forgiven?’

Happy, indeed, are those who are called (even quietly) to this supper!”



60th Anniversary Mass & Party for Fr. Gagnon!!



The parishioners of St. Francis are cordially invited to join Fr. Gagnon as he celebrates his 60th anniversary to the priesthood.

Fr. Gagnon will celebrate a Mass of Thanksgiving on Friday, June 24th at 6 p.m. at St. Francis.

A dinner reception will follow at Lenzi's Millhouse. The donation is \$25 per person. Tickets for the reception will be on sale the weekend of June 4th and 5th.

Come and be a part of the celebration! Also join us on Monday, May 16 at 6:30PM as we prepare the entertainment for Fr. Gagnon's celebration.

All are welcome!!



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