

Homily: 3rd Sunday of Lent: Cycle C: 2016: Ex 3: 1-8, 13-15; Ps 103; 1 Corth 10: 1-6,
10-12; Lk 13: 1-9

“The Burning Bush as an image of the Holy Mass and the Call to Conversion of Heart”

The whole Catholic spiritual life is an ongoing journey to encounter the thrice holy God: the 3 divine persons in one mysterious Godhead who call us into intimate union with themselves. Good to reflect upon the Mass as danger is: familiarity breeds contempt.

1. **As Moses today encounters God in the mystery of the “burning bush” that is not consumed, so we as Catholics encounter God in the mystery of the Sacrifice of the Mass.** The Mass is the one place on earth that is a **direct** encounter with Heaven as the saints say; in fact, as St. John Vianney pointed out so beautifully, *“if we knew the reality of what occurs at every Mass, the fullness of God’s love made present, we would die of love.”* At every Mass we encounter the all holy Triune God that is why it is called by the Second Vatican Council: **the source and summit of our Faith as Catholics.** Mass is the one place where the graces Jesus won for us on the Cross are applied to all the living and the deceased; how much we benefit spiritually from these graces depends on our dispositions of heart and soul. **The Mass is the most perfect prayer:** the one eternal sacrifice of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ made present in an unbloody manner. **It is His sacrifice of Calvary for us sinners’ redemption made present in a mystical and real way!** This image is brought home in a powerful way in the movie *the Passion of the Christ*, when Jesus is on the Cross and has a flashback to the Last Supper, the First Mass, and we see Him holding up the Host after pronouncing the words of Institution and Consecration which every priest utters solemnly at every Mass. What an awesome reality! It also shows why **we need to do our part to promote vocations to the priesthood** because without a priest we do not have the Mass. That is amazing! Jesus utilizes us frail human priestly instruments to confect or make present in REALITY His one eternal sacrifice on the Cross at every Mass for the salvation of sinners. Do we thank God on a daily basis for this gift of the Mass, our own encounter with the burning bush of God’s holy presence or have we gotten into a spiritual rut and take it for granted? What about daily

Mass? At every parish there are many more people who could come to daily Mass. Do we ever consider doing that? If you come, you will never regret it.

2. **Do we find Mass boring?** Well, if so, then what are we doing to change that unfortunate reality? We only get out of Mass what we put into it! I would like tonight to give you a few things to ponder in this regard: of being properly disposed to receive the spiritual benefits of the Mass and more importantly to worship God with a pure heart. The big question is: **when we come to Mass are we prepared interiorly to enter into the mystery of the Mass, before, during and after the Sacrifice of the Mass is offered?!** Let's start with our preparation **before** Mass. *Do we pray on the way to Church? Do we try to get here early in order to quiet our minds down to really enter into the mode of prayer? Do we observe the one hour Eucharistic fast: no food, no drink (other than water), no candy or gum, to prepare our hearts and souls to receive the Lord of the universe by a minimal act of self-denial? Do we go to the Sacrament of Confession on a regular basis to make sure that we NEVER receive our Blessed Lord in the state of mortal sin?* These essential steps of preparing, for Mass before we even step into the doors of the Church, will ensure that we interiorly come to see the Mass for the awesome reality it is!

3. **Once we enter the Church building, then we are called to enter into the mystery of Christ's one eternal Sacrifice made present in the Mass with our whole hearts and minds.** In a real spiritual sense to take off our sandals like Moses and walk on Holy ground, as we are invited to encounter the all holy God in a personal way. **How do we enter into this Sacred Mystery when we are here?** Well, **during** Mass - *do we focus to the best of our ability and truly pray the Mass: the prayers, the responses, the songs, listen to the readings and homily attentively, allowing the Holy Spirit to draw our hearts to a sense of awe at the moment of the Consecration, when the bread and wine are transformed into the Body and Blood of Christ, **OR** are we daydreaming, looking at our nails, at the people around us, whispering to our neighbor, thumbing through the missal or reading the bulletin?* Yes we are weak and sometimes it is hard to focus,

depending on how we feel, what is going on in our lives outside of Church, etc., BUT the Holy Spirit will help us to do better, if we ask Him in humility and love.

What a beautiful thing to work on this Lent! Finally if we are properly spiritually disposed- *having faith, not being aware of mortal sin on our soul and having kept the 1 hour fast*, and are able to receive the Lord in Holy Communion, we are then called to make a prolonged Thanksgiving for this great mystery of receiving Jesus's very Body and Blood, after Communion and then **after** Mass. *To try to keep a profound reverential silence both interior and exterior since we truly are not only stepping on Holy ground like Moses, but have received the God of the universe into our very hearts and souls. WOW! How we need to thank God at the end of Mass, and after we leave the Church, in a spirit of ongoing prayer for the gift of being able to participate in the Mass and to ask Him to help us to be good witnesses to our Catholic Faith throughout the week.* All of us, to the day we die, can grow deeper in our appreciation for the Mass which is the source and summit of our Faith. **May the Lord help each one of us to grow spiritually through the Mass, on a daily basis if possible, to love Him more and more deeply, and give ever more generous loving service to our neighbor by the graces of salvation and holiness we receive at each Mass.** We can't get these graces praying in the woods (wink) - it's only at Mass! To quote St. John Vianney, the patron saint of parish priests, once again, *"if we understood the true value of the Mass, we would die of love; and at the end of our lives we will see the true eternal value of the Mass and wish we had participated more frequently and with more reverence and love."* Well you and I have the chance to do that now - let's not wait until we die and it is too late, like the barren fig tree in the Gospel today- which the Lord only gives one more year for it to bear fruit or it will be cut down! May we bear spiritual fruit now, by loving the Mass and allowing the Lord to transform us spiritually in holiness through His one eternal Sacrifice made present at each Mass where the graces of salvation are given to the living, and the souls in Purgatory, for purification on the narrow path to Heaven. A reminder: if you want to learn more about the Mass, come to the adult ed class we are doing right now on Sundays in the retreat center while CCD is going on. God bless you.