

Homily: 20th Sunday: 2015: Cycle B: Prov 1-6; Ps. 34; Eph 5: 15-20; Jn 6: 51-58

“The Eucharist as the source of all prayer”

In the last few weeks we have been called by the Lord to reflect on what it means to be a person of Faith, to turn to Him as the living source of spiritual water for our thirsty souls, and how the Eucharist is meant to be THE source of spiritual encouragement for us in this valley of tears. Today the Lord Jesus explicitly lays out His teaching on the Eucharist which is TRULY in substance His Body and Blood under the form of real food and real drink to our senses. It is the mystery and miracle of our Catholic faith which we must never take for granted. If we truly turn to the Lord in love, He will transform us in holiness over time. How can the Mass or the Eucharist bring this about in our lives? I want to briefly look at the traditional 4 forms of prayer and how each of them is tied into the Holy Eucharist.

1. **Intercession.** It is at Mass, in the celebration of the Holy Eucharist, that we are called to bring our petitions before our God. We are to beg and beseech Him to have mercy on us and on the whole world. To pray for the living and the dead. To give our hearts and lives to Him in the communion of Faith we share with our brothers and sisters. Liturgical prayer, of which the celebration of the Eucharist is the Highest form, is the most important work of God the Church participates in, for the salvation of the human race in Christ. We are as a community of Faith and as individuals to pray for one another and to entrust one another to God’s Providential Care. But it is not magic, **we must strive to live a holy life** - to make sure our conduct in daily life is a reflection of Christ’s holiness and His standards of goodness, for the closer we come to God, the more powerful our intercessions become. That is what St. Paul is getting at today in the Second Reading when he says, *“Watch carefully how you live, not as foolish persons but as wise, making the most of every opportunity because the days are evil. Therefore do not continue in ignorance, but try to understand what is the will of the Lord”* (which is definitively made known to us through the Church’s Magisterial teaching on faith and morals - see *The Catechism of the Catholic Church* as a reflection of this).

2. **Adoration.** This is the prayer by which we love God for who He is. Offering the Mass is the most perfect form of adoration of the Blessed Trinity, for it is a renewal and re-presentation of Jesus's one eternal offering of Himself on the Cross for the salvation of the human race. We are called to share in Christ's adoration of the Father in the power of the Holy Spirit at every celebration of the Eucharist. It is also why spending time before Jesus in the Tabernacle or in times of Eucharistic adoration fosters this sense of adoration of God in our hearts.

3. **Reparation.** The very word reparation means to repair damage - to make up for an offense with an act of love or humble sorrow. The Church calls us to have a spirit of reparation in our lives, acknowledging we are sinners who have hurt God and others by our selfish actions - and when we become aware of them to make amends to the best of our ability. In terms of the Eucharist, Jesus makes Himself extremely vulnerable: *He knows we can receive Him without the proper disposition of faith and freedom from mortal sin,* and so we should always carefully examine our consciences before approaching the Holy Altar to receive Him. It is not without reason that the Angel at Fatima taught the 3 little seers the following somber yet powerful prayer of reparation to say daily: *"Most Holy Trinity, Father, Son and Holy Spirit, I adore you profoundly and I offer you the Most Precious Body, Blood, Soul, and Divinity of Jesus Christ present in all the Tabernacles of the world in reparation for all the outrages, sacrileges, and indifference committed against Him in the most Blessed Sacrament. Amen."*

4. **Thanksgiving.** The last type of prayer the Eucharist calls us to is to thanksgiving or gratitude for all the blessings God has bestowed on us as individuals and as a people. The very word **Eucharist** means thanksgiving, and it is by celebrating the Eucharist that we give the greatest praise to God of who He is and what He does in His eternal goodness, by uniting ourselves with Jesus in His one eternal offering of self-giving love on the Cross. This is why the Church, as a good spiritual Mother, requires us to attend Mass on all Sundays and Holy Days once we make our 1st Holy Communion. It is the least we can do to thank God for His great goodness. May all of us grow in our love for the Lord in the Holy Eucharist!