

FATHER MARK SCHULTE HOMILY
Eleventh Sunday in Ordinary Time (B)
June 13, 2021
“Sacred Heart – Immaculate Heart”

In recent days, the Church has celebrated two very important Feast days, the Feast of the Sacred Heart of Jesus and the Feast of the Immaculate Heart of Mary.

We know that the heart is the seat of love. When you give someone your heart you give them your love, you give them the most intimate and sacred part of you. For Jesus, his greatest act of love was His passion and death for us. As He hung on the cross, the soldier’s lance pierced His side and into His heart and out flowed blood and water. The water to cleanse us of sin in baptism and His blood to nourish us sacramentally. For these and other reasons, the church and the faithful venerate the Sacred Heart of Jesus. It is the very heart of God (CCC 478, 694, 1225) (Jn 19:34).

Closely associated with the Sacred Heart of Jesus is the Immaculate Heart of His Mother Mary. The flesh of the heart of Jesus comes from her flesh. The suffering of Mary is intimately related to the suffering of Jesus. The prophecy of Simeon is fulfilled in her suffering. He said: “A sword will pierce your heart”. Her sword of suffering is her sorrow, in witnessing the suffering of her son Jesus. She contemplated from early on that the life of her son would consist in suffering for His people (Lk 2:22-39, 51).

Mary united her intense suffering with the suffering of her Son Jesus. Many believe this unity of suffering of the two hearts of Jesus and Mary earns for her the title of co-redemptrix. Jesus permits His Mother to share in His own redemptive passion. Every believer can freely choose to imitate the Mother of God by joining their own daily suffering, their own daily crosses with the saving passion and death of Jesus (LG 8).

It is a popular pious practice to enthrone the two hearts of Jesus and Mary in their homes as a sign of personal devotion and the joining of their own hearts to the hearts of Jesus and Mary; as a sign of unity with them. I would encourage the faithful to participate in the enthronement of the two hearts of Jesus and Mary in their homes.

I would like to switch gears for a moment and say a few words about our Bishop’s most recent letter. The “Catholic Times” is the title of our Diocesan paper, or magazine. In this magazine our Bishop Thomas John Paprocki has written a letter addressing the current dispensations regarding obligatory Sunday Mass attendance, as it relates to the Covid-19 situation. Perhaps some of you have already read the letter.

- As of June 11, state government officials have announced that all public venues can now operate at full capacity.
- Following on that announcement, the bishop is now removing all remaining dispensations from the obligation to attend Mass on Sundays and Holy Days of Obligation as of Saturday, June 12, Feast of the Immaculate Heart of Mary.
- He said that if need be, Pastors can grant dispensations on an individual basis.

- The bishop mentioned a number of liturgical practices that were curtailed as a result of Covid-19. These practices may now be resumed.

I think that many would agree that the circumstances of this past year have created many disruptions in the lives of the faithful. It has created a lot of fear where there should have been very little fear. There are many opinions about the whole Covid-19 situation, as many opinions as there are people, and people are certainly free to have their own opinion. We have all heard jokes regarding opinions.

For my part, as your pastor, I was not willing to either participate in the fear or do anything that I felt would exacerbate the fear regarding Covid-19. I presented in various ways to the faithful the Diocesan guidelines about the Covid disease and then I let the faithful make up their own minds. In my view, the government, and in its own way the Church, did enough to make people fearful without me adding to their fears in some way, either by micro-managing your personal hygiene practices, your Mass attendance scheduling, or how you gathered in the church, God's Temple, commonly referred to as "social distancing". For the most part I left those decisions up to you as free adult individuals, and I think we did just fine.

We didn't rope-off pews and then herd people around to a place to sit like so many cattle. There were no ushers barking at you to properly wear a face covering. When I gave you Holy Communion, I didn't treat you as if you were somehow contaminated goods by using excessive hygiene practices while distributing Holy Communion to you, and you didn't treat others that way either. And I thank you for that. The question then becomes, what will people do when the powers that be foist this situation on us again? As for us, we will conduct ourselves with the same dignity that we have done all along up to this point.

As we begin the summer months and some of the Covid hype is beginning to subside, I think that it is a good time for all of us to recommit ourselves to our Catholic faith. We can do this in a number of ways, but one of those ways is to return to consistent Sunday Mass attendance as our bishop is calling us to do.

Please make an effort to reach out to all of our Catholic brothers and sisters and remind them of the importance of consistent Sunday Mass attendance. It continues to remain the norm for "keeping holy the Lord's day", in a way that "TV Masses" can never hope to accomplish.