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TEACHING MASS - BULLETIN INSERT
SUNDAY, JANUARY 8, 2023



A CALL TO COME AND SEE THE LORD

On Epiphany Sunday, we celebrate the story of three wise men who, following a star, left the comfort of their homes and came together to follow an invitation from God to a humble stable in the town of Bethlehem. Inside, their eyes beheld a newborn child laying in a manger, a feeding trough, as though he were food for animals. And yet, these foreign men from afar knelt in worship because, with eyes of faith, they saw that this child was the King of kings.

These three men would be the first to approach the Lord and worship Him in this way, bringing Him gifts of gold, frankincense and myrrh, but they would not be the last. We continue this tradition every time we gather at Holy Mass. When we kneel during our Mass, we look up and see what appears to be food: bread and wine. And yet, with our eyes of faith, we know this is no bread at all, but is the body of Christ, and that the wine is His most precious blood. We see Jesus Christ in his body, blood, soul, and divinity as He sits enthroned on the Altar, and we bring Him the gifts of our time and attention, the things He desires from us most of all.



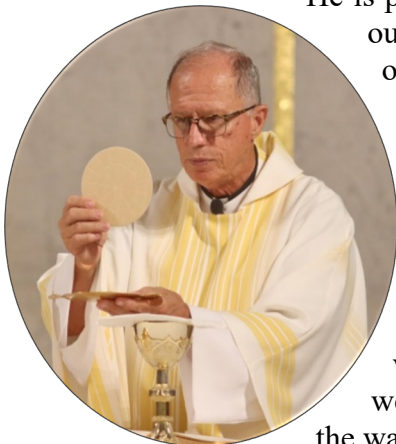
God calls us, just as He called those wise men, to come and see our Savior in person. He invites us to encounter Him in His house, gathering us together as a family, as brothers and sisters, to be with one another and with God at His table.

JESUS IS WITH US AT THE MASS

Most of us are familiar with Jesus' promise that He is always with us, wherever two or three are gathered in His name. This is truer at Mass than at any other gathering or worship space. He is present with us on multiple levels.

He is present in our communion with each other, mystically pouring out Himself through our common prayer. He is present in the priest, who acts in the person of Christ as he offers the body and blood of our blessed Lord on the altar to His Heavenly Father. He is present in the Word proclaimed from the scriptures by the lectors and by the deacon and priest, for He is the Word made flesh and is present whenever that Word is proclaimed. But above all else, He is most profoundly present in the Eucharist itself. Inside every host and every drop within the chalice is His body, blood, soul, and divinity. This is not a symbol or a metaphor, but His actual physical self. Yes, it looks like bread and tastes like it, but with our faith, we know that this is His body and blood. Within that body and blood, Jesus is alive and present. It is Jesus who we see on the altar, who we receive on our hands and on our tongue, and who we consume into our very bodies so that we can take Jesus with us as we depart from the walls of the church and go forth into the world. God is in no way distant from us when

we gather to worship at Mass. Rather, He is there with us and is so close to us that He allows us to take Him into our very selves so that we can be one with Him.



JESUS: PRIEST, PROPHET, KING

When the three wise men came before the Lord, they offered Him gold, frankincense and myrrh. These small and seemingly strange gifts hold a great symbol of what we know through faith of Jesus Christ. The three wise men knew that they were encountering a king, but also a priest and a prophet. Indeed, Jesus is all of these things and, when we come to Mass, we encounter Jesus as all three.

JESUS THE PRIEST

In the Old Testament, the Lord established a priesthood that would offer the sacrifices of animals to God on behalf of the Jewish people. In our New Testament, we now have a great high priest: Jesus Christ, who offers up Himself on the cross as a sacrifice so powerful that no other sacrifice needs to be offered. In the Mass, we have Christ continuing to offer that same sacrifice through the mystical realities of our liturgy. At Mass, it is as if we have been transported backward in time to both Good Friday and Easter Sunday, to the moment of the crucifixion and resurrection of the Lord. On Good Friday, our sacrifice was offered; on Easter Sunday, that same sacrifice, Jesus Christ, was raised up. Within our parish priest who celebrates the Mass, Christ is at work, changing our liturgy from a simple reenactment to a powerful reliving of that Great Event. It is Christ who offers up the Eucharist, His body and blood, to God our father.

JESUS THE PROPHET

In the gospel, Jesus calls Himself “the way, the truth, and the life.” His teachings are the fullness of truth and provide us not only with the way that we can live out a most fulfilling Christian life, but also the way to come to know God personally and perfectly. At every Mass, we proclaim the word of God. As the word made flesh, it is Jesus himself who speaks to us through the word. This is true not only of the gospel, but of all the readings. For all of scripture is inspired by God and Jesus is God. Jesus speaks to us as a church and as individuals through scripture.

JESUS THE KING

On the day of His crucifixion, Jesus Christ was crowned with thorns and mounted upon the throne that is the cross. As we celebrate the Mass and recall these events, we exchange these painful images for glorious symbols of our Lord's kingship. Sometimes we ask, “why do we use a golden chalice when Jesus surely used a cup of wood or clay at the Last Supper?” The answer is that we are not simply reenacting the Last Supper. We are giving our Lord a splendid and worthy throne. We enthrone the presence of Jesus Christ on the altar, arrayed in gold because that is the way we should treat our triumphant king. Even as the Lord appears to us in so humble a form as bread and wine, we give to Him a worthy reception. We bow before our mighty king made known to us in bread and wine.

