

My Vacation



When Jesus went into the region of Caesarea Philippi he asked his disciples, “Who do people say that the Son of Man is?” They replied, “Some say John the Baptist, others Elijah, still others Jeremiah or one of the prophets.” He said to them, “But who do you say that I am?” Simon Peter said in reply, “You are the Messiah, the Son of the living God.” Jesus said to him in reply, “Blessed are you, Simon son of Jonah. For flesh and blood has not revealed this to you, but my heavenly Father. And so I say to you, you are Peter, and upon this rock I will build my church, and the gates of the netherworld shall not prevail against it. I will give you the keys to the kingdom of heaven. Whatever you bind on earth shall be bound in heaven; and whatever you loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven.” Then he strictly ordered his disciples to tell no one that he was the Messiah.

Matthew 16:13-20

As I write this I’m visiting relatives in central Florida and reflecting on the Sunday Mass I attended yesterday at Saint Joseph’s in Winter Haven. More specifically, I was reflecting upon how beautiful and reverential is the Mass we celebrate at Saint Joseph’s in Modesto. Thank you, Father Joseph!

Celebrated properly, the Mass allows us to transport across time to the places where Jesus walked, spoke and healed sick people, to the last supper and the foot of the cross, the resurrection and even the end of time. Celebrated properly and reverently, the Mass is a beautiful expression of worship given to us to uplift and edify the human spirit and draw us closer to the God who created us in His own image and likeness and wishes to love us eternally. The Mass is one of the great gifts of God to a fallen and undeserving people. It is heaven on earth. Thank you Father Joseph for helping me to see and understand the depth and beauty of the sacred liturgy!

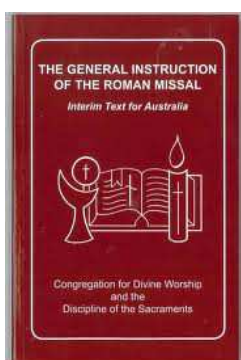


Mass isn’t for everyone. It’s for those who want to spend time in God’s presence and it should reflect the glory of God, not the foolishness of a fallen people.

Done poorly, it’s a congestion of different ideas to make things happy and make disinterested people interested. It can look like a hodgepodge of ill-fitting pieces from different puzzles attempting to form some happy picture. Done poorly, it looks more like entertainment and less like worship; no incense, no bells, nothing holy and set apart. In short, Mass shouldn’t be done poorly.

I’ve been to a three-ring circus before, and what I witnessed yesterday was almost that with hand-holding across the aisles during the Lord’s Prayer, a VERY casual Rite of Peace, and three lay persons standing behind the priest on the sanctuary during the Epiclesis.

[Editor’s note: Epiclesis is the consecration, where what was bread and wine, become the body, soul, and divinity of our Lord Jesus Christ. According to the General Instruction of the Roman Missal, only those ordained are permitted into the sanctuary, as shown in the picture to the right where our Holy Father, Pope Benedict, along with Bishops is in the middle of the Epiclesis of a mass.]



These things were notable, but most disturbing of all was that every person in the congregation but me got up and received communion. Really? I’m the only sinner in central Florida? What will they do when I leave? Does the Bishop know about this?

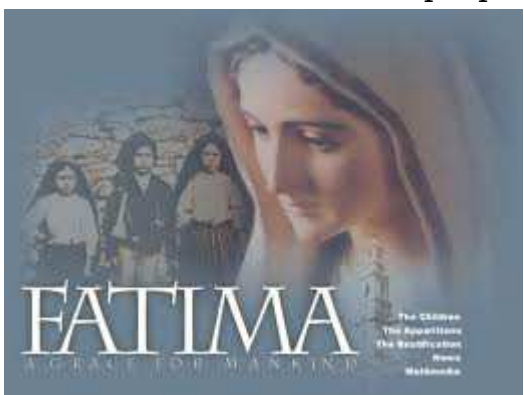
Of the three or four parishes we’ve gone to in this area, this is the most orthodox that we’ve found; the others were much too liberal and “sideshow” for me. What can we do about it? I’m not sure. I have some ideas, but I’m not the liturgy cop. At the minimum, this experience

makes me want to learn more about the rubrics of the Mass as well as pray that the church find unity, humility and obedience in worship.

This I know; the church in America is heading into very rough waters. Government policy is preparing to destroy the church and remove the One True God from the public square, and they might prevail. Wishy-washy worship and limp-wristed theology will not sustain our people through difficult times, let alone harsh times. People who don't have a firm grip on their faith will slip and fall into the abyss of an atheistic world. How can we get a firm grip on our faith when it's corrupted by poor stewardship? This means laity as well as clergy.

The passage I quoted above reminds us of two things; first, Jesus says that He will build His Church on Peter. It's His Church, not ours, and we have no right to change things.

Second: He promised that the gates of hell will not prevail against the church that He founded; it says nothing about the Church in the United States or any other country. Recall what happened to Christianity in communist Russia and Nazi Germany. It was eliminated and millions of people were killed or sent to work camps.



In the apparition at Fatima, the Blessed Virgin told the three children that many souls would fall into Hell like snowflakes, because they had no one to pray for them. Yet who knows how to pray when the highest prayer of the Church, the Mass, is no longer conducted with reverence, but as an entertainment venue where we applaud the musicians? Mass is not entertainment, it is worship. Our focus should be on Jesus and Jesus alone.

As I reflect upon the Mass I attended here in central Florida and the Mass I will return to at St. Joseph's in Modesto, I am filled with joy for the gift I have received, because Father Illo is obedient to his vocation. Father Joseph, I will miss you, and I will encourage your Brother Knights to pray for your strength and happiness. You have done more for our parish family than you may ever know! God's speed to you.

Ed Ibarra
Lecturer

