
A series of Forum articles called,
"Why do I pray these prayers at church?"
written by Bill Razgunas.

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This is the 50th article in a series called,
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2025-03-25

Eucharistic Prayer #1, Saints and Martyrs

Listed in Eucharistic Prayer 1: John the Baptist, Stephen, Matthias, Barnabus, Ignatius, Alexander, Marcellinus, Peter,

Felicity, Perpetua, Agatha, Lucy, Agnes, Cecelia, Anastasia and all your Saints.

We feel reverence and awe when we think of very old things. People put special emphasis on renewing or remembering ancient prophecies and rituals. What significance do we want to place on ancient stories that still inspire today? The above list is one that we all hear whenever Eucharist Prayer 1 is prayed at mass. Who are they to me? Why are they incorporated into this prayer instead of the hundreds of other saints that could have been chosen? It turns out that some of the saints listed are virtually unknown. Most of them have some documentation regarding their martyrdom. Some of them we aren't sure how they died. How did they get included in this distinguished list?

I find meaning because it reminds me of the antiquity of our faith. All of them were part of very ancient liturgies. These people were somebody's son or daughter. They represent someone's friend or they were a friend of someone who knew them well. These people cherished the fact that the listed people chose to be martyrs. This was personal to them. Hundreds and hundreds of years have gone by since then. We remember them because of the antiquity of our liturgy.

Think about Stonehenge, located in Wiltshire England. It attracts enough visitors every year so that they have needed to build a fence around it to protect the 3,000 year old reminder of it's

designers. It exists as a reminder of a religious practice that is no longer practiced today.

*This is the **51st** article in a series called,*
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2025-03-25

Offering the same sacrifice at church

Why do we pray offering the same sacrifice at church all the time? We offer the body and blood of Jesus, day after day, week after week, year after year. Is God the Father pleased with this? We must be doing this for a reason. How can we tell if "the sacrifice" is working?

Why offer God a sacrificial offering? It's not because God needs it! If God doesn't need our sacrificial offering, then we are doing it for ourselves! What does this mean?

Scripture says that we are at the intersection of two forces. Galatians 5:17 "For the desires of the flesh are against the Spirit, and the desires of the Spirit are against the flesh, for these are opposed to each other, to keep you from doing the things you want to do.". God puts us at this intersection so that we may begin to choose new habits.

God killed us when Christ was put to death. God gave us new life when he raised Christ from the dead (See Romans 6:4 and Galatians 2:20). This happened when you were baptized. However, while God's work accomplished a very resounding victory over evil, the work continues in us. Our old life force is called the flesh. Our new life is found in Christ and is

powered by the Spirit. We must choose the Spirit over and against the flesh. We must exercise our will in order to end the influence of our old life.

This has everything to do with the sacrifice of the mass. We need to choose to prefer Christ's saving work every day and every hour of each day. God has made abundant reminders of this. We know that Christ died once for all. To those celebrating the mass, it is happening as we worship. Think of it like this. The Father allowed his son to be sacrificed so that we might enter into this event. Our entry isn't optional. Everything that we hope for ultimately comes from entering into Christ's sacrifice. The mass is God's gift for helping us reach the goal of living our new life in this world. It is imperative that we take advantage of all the gifts that God gives us in this life.

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Where have they gone?

Lets look at what the Catholic Church's strengths are. Catholics are very strong with regard to the use of ritual and repetitive prayer. Catholics have a very strong

awareness of the high priestly role of Christ in our lives. To put this a different way, we have the mass and we have the Real Presence of Christ in the Eucharist. Why isn't this enough? I know three or four men that have left the Catholic Church. I believe that they are men of good conscience. However, they did not know how to translate the strengths of being Catholic to help them overcome the problems they were facing.

I do know that each week you and I meet men and women who are hungry to see Christ. They are watching us to see how our faith lived out! They are looking for living proof of the relevance of people's Sunday attendance. How relevant is your Sunday attendance at church? How does one go about answering this question? One way is to ask "Is my life all about me?"

When our lives are more about the Lord than they are about us, something wonderful happens. We become less self centered because we are centered on him. As we are more focussed on him, it moves us away from "What is the minimum that we can give?" It becomes a change of heart that leads us to ask "How can we make MORE of our selves available to the Lord?" When we die, it won't be about how much stuff we have OR did we protect our time from being used up! It will be totally about "How much we gain in light of losing ourselves for the Lord?" Jesus said "For whoever wishes to save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for my sake will find it." Matt 16:25

Telling others that they should become Roman Catholic because they can also have the Real Presence of Christ may win a few over based on the theology alone. However, losing our lives for Christ's sake will win over many because we will be demonstrating how to live eternal life NOW. Our lives will no longer be about Sunday worship alone. The spiritual influence of our lives will extend to all seven days of the week!

Hear this as a trumpet sounding a clear message. God is calling the faithful to greater things. See it as a beacon showing us the way.

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Lamb of God who takes away the sins of the world!

In grade school, the nuns taught us about our Roman Catholic faith. One day our teacher said “What happens to our sins after they have been forgiven?” She went on to explain that our sins were like a nail which has been pounded into a piece of wood. When the priest forgives our sins in the Sacrament of Reconciliation it can be compared to having the nail removed from the wood. She went on to explain that the little hole where the nail used to be would always remain as a reminder of the sin which we had committed. Our young minds understood that even if God forgave our sin, he never forgot what we had done. To a child’s mind, a parent that kept a list of all the wrongdoing we had ever done was also someone who had never completely forgiven us. Have we carried this understanding of incomplete forgiveness into our adult lives?

Every week we pray the prayer “Lamb of God who takes away the sins of the world.” There can be a flaw in the way we pray this prayer. This flaw almost completely wipes out its intended meaning. After all, if God takes away our sins where does he put them? Does he have a vault where he banishes all these sins to? Does he keep them on file in case he wants to refer back to them when we stand before him at the last judgment? How can an ALL KNOWING God FORGET something? Isn’t this just an adult way of saying that even when the sinful “nail” has been removed, God keeps “fresh” the memory of our sin because you can always look at the hole in the wood? Who will rescue us from this dilemma? Don’t fear God has provided a way out.

If this is going on in our hearts, we must remember that God’s forgiveness of our sins is only a partial view of the big picture. The BIG picture is that God has (and continues to) rescue us from the power of Satan. Jesus’ death on the cross wasn’t ONLY about gaining forgiveness for our sins. Scripture paints the larger picture of Christ ransoming us from the power of the devil. Our sins were holding us captive to the devil who owned us and controlled us. When God atoned for our sins on the cross, his plan was to permanently block the devil from enslaving us again. This is the overwhelming reason why God will not call our forgiven sins into his memory. God paid the sacrificial price to ransom us from our sin. Why would he change his mind and give the devil ownership of our lives after paying such a great price? The answer is that he wouldn’t do that. When God decides to forget, nothing the devil does will ever “remind” God of our sins. Can we be free of self-condemnation?

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Returning to the Church

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Returning to the Church

I hear many say, "We have no problem with the man Jesus. Our problem is with the leaders of the Catholic Church." What should be done in order to be a positive influence in the face of these unfortunate thoughts? In order to do this, let's look at how people find themselves in this situation. How come there is such a great chasm between their experience of church and their faith?

Let me share a real story about how this worked itself out in Sue's life. She is a senior who was emotionally injured by her experiences with the church while growing up. Her inner wounds were 40 to 50 years old and her bitterness toward the Catholic Church was deep. At this point I would say that she was a Nature worshiper. One weekend she came to Ann Arbor to visit her friend George. The weather outside was cold and the sidewalks were slippery. Sue fell and injured her leg. Since there was an ugly bruise, George asked me to take Sue to the emergency room. I stayed with her and the time was well spent listening to her life's story. After many hours she was sent home. On the way home, she said that she wanted to express her appreciation. I explained that she could do this by thinking a little better of Jesus and the Catholic Church. She emphatically said

"THAT'S NOT GOING TO HAPPEN!"

A week later, Sue slipped on the ice again. This time she hit her head quite badly. The bruising on her face rapidly became very pronounced. After I saw it, I said to myself "This woman is going to die tonight." I took Sue to the emergency room. Since she had a very positive experience with our conversation the week before, she wanted to hear about my experience of following Christ. As we talked, I silently prayed for Sue. My sharing about Christ was like a single "barrel" of a shot gun. The other "barrel" of the shotgun was loaded with my prayers. I gave her both "barrels" without reservation that night. Why hold back in the face of her serious injury? Would she die that night? While talking to Sue, I wondered if God would do something if I reached over and touched her shoulder. When I did this Sue started repeatedly saying "You touched me!" Sue never admitted that God touched her that night. However, I saw Sue's injury rapidly showed signs of healing. Later that night Sue was discharged and went back to stay with George. Sue was back on her feet the next day. Over the next couple of years, Sue embraced a deeper faith in Christ and returned to the Catholic Church.

Look at what happened! Sue had been fully trained as a Catholic. She had left the Catholic Church as a young adult. Subsequently, Sue had no faith in Christ. Her faith in "nature spirits" had been picked up along her life's journey. The first goal was to lead her to a fuller knowledge of Christ. Since this was blocked by SUBSTANTIAL emotional pain surrounding her injured relationship with the Catholic Church, I just

listened while quietly praying. I did not try to solve any of her problems. During this time of listening, I asked that God would begin to heal what is going on inside of her. This established some fertile ground in Sue's heart. Christ acted in this situation and subsequently Sue found healing in her relationship with the church. That night, Sue's wasn't able to identify God as her healer. Its not that unusual for someone to experience a life changing event without fully comprehending it. Sometimes it takes many years for someone to admit that the Almighty God acted.

Do you want to learn how to share your faith in this way? I have started an evangelism team at St. Francis. You can receive an invitation by sending me a text with your phone number included. I will call you back as soon as I am able. My phone number is 734-546-6445. God wants to work in powerful ways through you!

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[NOT published PLEASE REWRITE if possible!!]

Fr James' homily OR (I love a captive audience)

This is the **VETO** Fr James' homily OR (I love a captive audience) [2023-] [VETOED by Rob & Jonathan & Fr. James... article that got "unpublished" because staff complained that it was weird.]

((NOT 47)) - article in a series called,

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Fr James' homily OR (I love a captive audience)

I hear many say, "While we are at church, enjoying the excellent preaching, we feel awed. However, when we leave, we immediately go back to the business of life and whatever pace it sets for us." What should be done in order to break this unfortunate pattern? In order to do this, let's look at how we find ourselves in this situation. How come there is such a great chasm between our experience of church and the business of life? For some of us, this is caused by the type of people we hang out with. Ask yourself if you are sharing your faith with your friends or are they slowly recruiting you away from your faith in Jesus. We shouldn't leave the positive experiences at church and quickly plunge ourselves back into the business of life. Instead, as soon as we get home, we must call our family (or anyone we are sharing our faith with) and firmly fix in our minds what we heard at church. After this, not before, we may engage in the unavoidable distractions that life throws at us.

As your pastor, listen to the principle that I am sharing with you! You must plan to do something different when you leave church. You must put the highest priority as to how you are going to change your routine so that you can incorporate the things that you heard at church. This will help you avoid the incredible foolishness of giving up six days or more to the business of daily life while failing to give more than one hour to

enhance and strengthen our spiritual lives. When you were a child, you studied your lessons at school. Your parents had you study so that you would remember your lessons LONGER than the time you were in the classroom. Shouldn't we do the same for ourselves? What would your teachers think if we only remembered the lesson as long as class lasted and promptly forgot everything immediately after? Isn't that what is happening when we receive priceless treasures that will follow us beyond death into eternal life and we nonetheless fail to choose to make it part of our routine. We thoughtlessly let these lessons escape from our minds and only seek to retrieve them at random intervals as we pursue the other demands of life. Who will pity us when we plot against our own self interest and later find ourselves in a terrible spiritual poverty? Let's resolve to change our routines so that it becomes an absolute requirement for us (and the others that we share our faith with) to regularly give the time needed to recall the things we have heard at church. By doing this, we can use our tremendous aptitude for spiritual things and move forward to the next step on life's path. In addition, doing so will make a tremendous difference to your ability to recall the things I lay before you at mass. This is made possible because you will understand your own thinking and will more readily link these with the spiritual things that are offered for your eternal benefit. This will make my labor lighter. It is no small thing that we priests work hard to shape our sermons to serve this end. It is impossible to personally meet with each of you as often as I would like. Therefore you must create routines where every day forms into a precious link in a chain. Then you can use this precious chain to adorn your soul with the beauty that can only come from Christ."

[Possibly published ?]

This is the **46** article in a series called,
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...
"You have grown far from me."

How would you know if God were speaking to you saying "You have grown far from me?" One way is to look at the "Treachery of the Comfortable." How can something which is comfortable become treacherous?

It is actually the easiest thing in the world to enter into the treachery that flows from all that is comfortable! We say that there is nothing wrong with routine. The mass can seem to be loaded with routine. You have said the Creed fifty two times in the last year. Given that you have been actively participating at mass for the last 35 years, you have said the Creed more than 1,800 times. Is it any wonder that the mass has lost some of its meaningfulness?

Psychologists refer to this as the "zone of comfort." We try to park in the same place so that it is easier to find our car after church. We try to sit in the same pew because that is where we have always sat. By sitting in the same pew, we also have the comfort level of having the same people sitting around us from week to week. Our responses to father's call to worship can also become routine. When he says "The Lord be with You!" we say "And with your spirit!" Psychologists refer to this repetition of our routine as the "Comfort Zone"

Trying harder to pay more attention isn't the only solution. It turns out that anything you do to step outside your comfort zone will breathe new life into your whole faith experience. How do we break the

paralysis of routine? Here are some suggestions:

- (a) Make up your mind to remember ONE thing from mass. For example: Make up your mind to remember one thing that father says in his homily. For most of us this will be harder than you think. When I first started trying to remember something meaningful from the mass, I checked what I could remember from mass after the walk to my car. Try it and see how you do! Its harder than you think!
- (b) Do Something Different! Change where you park your car OR Say "Hello" to a stranger as you walk into church OR Deliberately choose a different pew to sit in.
- (c) Increase the volume of your "Amen" is when replying to the Eucharistic Minister. "Amen" means "It is true!" Say "Amen" like you want everyone to know.
- (d) If it helps your memory of something at mass, jot a note in your smart phone. Don't worry about it what other people are thinking! Just do it!
- (e) If you travel home with others after mass, take time to remind each other what was meaningful for you at mass

Routine is comfortable, however, it can also be treacherous. I use the word treacherous because those peaceful relaxed feelings betray us. This is because the Zone of Comfort hides a secret: The more you choose to stay comfortable in this zone, the less comfort that this "space" gives you. A little bit of discomfort can go a long way to helping us all find our way into heaven. We need to embrace some discomfort to keep our faith experience from **shrinking**. The Zone of **Discomfort** forces our mental boundaries to get bigger when we change something. It only takes repeating these unfamiliar things three of more times. Do you see the treacherous side of our Zone of Comfort?

Our reluctance to go outside our Zone of Comfort will eventually attract our Lord's disapproval. He might already be saying to us, with sadness in his heart, "You have grown far from me." How can anyone who is regularly receiving the Eucharist grow far from God? This is a topic to investigate another time!

[Published 2023-07-23]

Is it possible to be Catholic but not Christian?

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45. Is it possible to be Catholic but not Christian?

Ever hear this scenario from a Catholic who has received all the sacraments: "I've stopped going to church on Sunday. I realized that I had very little in common with the Catholic church."

So if you hear this kind of thing, what reply should you make? The first thing to ask is: "Who is Jesus to you?" Maybe they have been losing interest with the trappings of the Catholic Church. What if someone has gradually lost interest in praying to saints but still believes that Jesus is the Son of God and that he gave his life to redeem the world? If this is the case, then the path back to the Catholic Church is much easier than if a person has abandoned all belief in Jesus's divinity not to mention the concept of sin. For this reason, you are wise to choose to dialogue with the person about what they hold to be true about Jesus FIRST!

Did you know that it is possible to hold some Catholic belief's to be true while ignoring the importance of Jesus' saving role through his death and resurrection? For example its good to be deeply devoted to Mary provided that a person holds that everyone needs to receive the gift of God's grace won for us on the cross. Marian devotion is NOT an essential belief in order to enter heaven. On the other hand, no one will enter heaven without the grace that Jesus won for us on the cross.

What are the essential foundational beliefs of the Catholic Church?

1) The first is that God loves us and that he wants good things for us!

2) The second is that it's man's fault that we are not able to enjoy God's love and understand what the good things are that he wants for us.

3) The third is that God's only provision for the dire place that human's find themselves in is his son Jesus Christ. Jesus is the only way to bridge the gap between God and man!

4) In order for us to enjoy God's love and receive his life we must put our faith in Jesus as God's Son and to ask Jesus to come to us and help us fully submit our lives to him. When we do this he will come and live in our hearts.

Do you want to lead someone back to the Church? Lead them back to Christ first!

[Published 2023-07-16]

God's sense of time

*This is the **44th** article in a series called,
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44. God's sense of time

Assume that you sinned against somebody? What if you lost count about how many times you have repented for this sin? 20 times? 50 times? How can God forgive us so many times? Do you see the problem here? How can something which happened thousands of years ago affect us now? Is Christ's atoning work timeless? How can something be both an event firmly anchored in chronological time while being timeless? Are there any other timeless things that happen in our lives?

Is love timeless? Even in secular contexts, romantic love is often portrayed as an abiding vision of something which was only a moment in time. Musicals are good examples of this. Remember Hello Dolly where Cornealis performed a solo "It only takes a moment to be loved a whole life long!" Moments of intense romantic love can make very long lasting memories. Is this only true of romantic love? How about service (agape) love? (Agape is pronounced ah-**gah**-pahy.) This agape love is best understood in our God's love for us. Does this same abiding vision of agape love come under the umbrella of timelessness? Without a doubt! Christ's selfless act of saving us qualifies as being timeless. This is agape love in its fullness. The scriptures don't stop there. Agape love will never end even after this world ends. We will be praising him for the wonders of his great love as portrayed in the death and resurrection of Jesus for all eternity. Does this memory ever end? NO! The horror of sinfulness HAS BEEN, IS NOW BEING and WILL BE FOREVER washed away by the eternity of joy which follows. Do you see the timelessness of Christ's atoning work?

In the mass we re-enter something that is already happening in our hearts. We live out Christ's atoning work as a part of our Christian

community. Re-encountering Christ's atoning work in our lives is an honor that we can experience every Sunday. In this way our hearts remain secure because our sins are covered or blotted out. Our lives are a witness of God's favor toward us. Listen to the priest as he prays the Eucharistic Prayers. Call to mind Christ's atoning work all week long. These are a few ways that we live in remembrance of him!

[published 2023-06??]

How much time do you and I have?

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43. How much time do you and I have?

Atonement: The result of our sins being covered or blotted out (so far as God is concerned). This action results in being reinstated in his favor. See Atonement in A Theological Word Book of the Bible Edited by Alan Richardson

How much time does anybody have before the end? Instead of chronological time, what if our time was measured in opportunities to do good? I was "sitting" with an elderly man named Ken while his caretakers were out. His life had been full of many accomplishments. Now he was confined to his bed as he waited to die. He complained to me about his caregivers and the way they took their time meeting his needs. He "knew" that he deserved better. He was Catholic and so I shared with him about lost opportunities. As Ken and I talked, I pointed out that the number of times that he had to be patient were running out. Patience, the fruit of the Holy Spirit, was never again going to have a chance to mature in the normal course of living a life of hope and faith. Ken sensed the problem of standing before the Lord having squandered his last chances to learn patience. I never saw him again. He died a month or two later. I was told that he had become a new person after our talk. The family that cared for him marveled at the changes that had occurred.

Its easy to see how Ken's opportunities were running out. How many opportunities do we have before the end? The End! What does that mean with regard to the way that Jesus atones for our sin? We all live in this generous time of having our sins covered so that they are no longer an obstacle between us and God. This of course assumes that we have given our lives to him. How long will this last? 2 Corinthians 6:2 says: "Behold, now is a very acceptable time; behold, now is the day of salvation." Scriptures tell us: Don't Wait! The opportunity to base our lives on the atonement that Jesus has provided will end someday. How many opportunities do we have left? Why do WE need to do something to accept Jesus' offer? Isn't it enough

that he shed his blood to redeem the world from sin? Is it possible to receive the grace of God in vain? What does it mean to give assent to God's gift without letting it affect our behavior? This is akin to receiving all the sacraments without letting them change our lives. Is this possible? UNFORTUNATELY, THE ANSWER IS YES! How do you know? All you have to do is observe anybody that has received all the sacraments and is living a life which is indiscernible from a non-Christian! God cares how we behave after we accept his terms of atonement.

We no longer have to labor under the burden of sin. At the same time our behavior must change to reflect his action to justify us and to begin showing the fruit of being a new creation. If we choose to believe in the trappings of being religious without entering into a personal relationship with Christ we will miss out on the abundant life he is offering us here. Maybe you don't know what the concept of "having a personal relationship with Christ" means. Ask one of the priests or deacons for help. If I can be of service, please call me. Call Bill Razgunas 734-546-6445

[Published 2023-06-11]

Eucharistic Habits

*This is the **42nd** article in a series called,*
"Why do I pray these prayers at church?"
written by Bill Razgunas.

Eucharistic Habits

Do we treat the Eucharist with boundless respect only as long as we can recognize the Body and the Blood? Does it offend God when we employ a double standard? On one hand we show respect for his bodily presence while in the church sanctuary. On the other hand we find ourselves responding disrespectfully to an unloving remark made by someone else who consumed the Eucharist earlier that day! Christ continues to make his home in their hearts despite their unloving behavior! Lets ask God to teach us how to honor his Eucharistic graces in the hearts of all those that Christ calls his own.

Prayer: Father, teach us to honor Christ's Eucharistic grace where ever we encounter him. When ever we tarnish our witness to your saving power, lead us to repent. Help us to live like we are actually loving you while we are loving one another.

[Published 2023-06-18]

What happens to us after we swallow the consecrated host?

*This is the **41st** article in a series called,
“Why do I pray these prayers at church?”
written by Bill Razgunas.*

What happens to us after we swallow the consecrated host?

One church father indicated that the sacramental presence of Jesus ends when the consecrated host can no longer be recognized as a host. However, what happens to **US** after we swallow the consecrated host? Notice this is a very different question. Maybe nothing happens and we will leave church and return next Sunday! This is certainly not a pious position. However, we aren't always filled with dutiful and holy thoughts! Sometimes, we are depressed and life seems meaningless. At other times, we may feel so bad that we resent the fact that we were born. (Maybe we should see a doctor and find out if we are depressed.) What is God doing at times like this? Do our feelings strip the Eucharist of meaning? No. Are we abandoned by God when we aren't performing up to his standards? No! When we are feeling very low we can pray this prayer:

“Heavenly Father, I praise you for the glory and power of your divine life, and I thank you for wanting me to share in it. Today, give me the grace of stillness—still all the desire within me to prove my love to you and still all oppressive and fearful thoughts that I shall never be able to do so. I renounce and reject the lie that I must earn your love, and I rebuke all thought patterns, compulsions, and fears that flow from this lie. I ask also that you would deafen me to the voice of the Accuser and consecrate my ears so that I might only hear your voice—the voice of the Good Shepherd.”

“I profess now my utter inability to save myself or to increase your love for me in any way solely through my own actions. I lay down now any fear of giving up control, and I turn my life over to your Son, Jesus. Renew within me the reality of your love and the power of the Holy Spirit. Allow me to more openly cooperate with the work of the Spirit in my life. I thank you for the freedom, peace and joy that you are already bringing to fruition in me, and I thank you for

your saving help. I ask all of this in the name and presence of Jesus Christ. Amen”
(see page 126 of **The Ten Biggest Lies of the Enemy—and How to Combat Them** by Deacon Keith Strohm Published: The Word Among Us Press Copyright 2018

This relates to our experience of the Eucharist. Even though the sacramental presence of Jesus ends when the consecrated host can no longer be recognized as a host, God is not a pinch-penny who retrieves his Holy Spirit. Even when we feel very far from him, he remains close at hand. While our understanding of what happens to us spiritually doesn't fully comprehend the disappearance of the sacramental presence of Jesus, his presence in our hearts is not withdrawn. The power of our digestion doesn't affect our spiritual life. Only through Christ, with Christ and in Christ can we reach the Father. God's grace through the Eucharist is God the Father's work in us.

Holy Smoke: What do you think about when the incense comes out? **[published]**



This is the **40th** article in a series called,
"Why do I pray these prayers at church?"
written by Bill Razgunas.

...

Holy Smoke: What do you think about when the incense comes out?

Why do we use incense at church? Is this just a "hang nail" left over from centuries old practices? By the way, did you know that you have been **incensed** after you have had the fragrant aroma directed toward you? This is different than the situation where you have gotten very angry at someone and said "I was so **incensed** by them!"

If you learn the times to use incense during the Mass so well that you can explain the meaning of each use to any one who will listen, what will you have accomplished? For example, what is the meaning of the priest's "journey" around the altar while swinging the thurible? (The thurible is the thing that the smoke comes out of.) Does it symbolically remind you of the journey of our Jewish forefathers around the desert for 40 years? If you know these things, what does it mean to you? It becomes meaningful to you when you understand that the path of our forebears foreshadows our personal journey through desert-like times in life where we feel far from God's presence.

Suppose that you have learned the deep meaning of terms like reconciliation, repentance, purification, expiation, reparation, sacrificial victim and divine mysteries. This is good. However, do you understand how they apply to your sin and to your pilgrimage to heaven? Here is another example: There is a part of each of us that longs to be purified from every hint

of sin. Do you let that powerful desire come to mind as the deacon waves the thurible at the congregation and then bows to us? What if this use of incense reminds us of our heartfelt prayer to be pure? Can we let the experience of smelling the incense remind us that our hearts will not be disappointed? As we experience a pure heart, we will see God!

If you learn the beauty of the prayers and understand how incense can sharpen our minds to his presence, what will you have accomplished? Example: You see that the church is filling-up with the fragrant smoke and you say to yourself "I'm supposed to remember that the incense is symbolic of the prayers of the saints." Have you dug deep enough to get everything out of this experience? You've recalled what it means in general. What does it mean to you? Does the aroma remind you that God hears your prayers? As the incense fills the church, let it remind you that God will powerfully express the desires of his heart as he repairs and redeems the injustices that we have brought to his attention in prayer. The use of incense can remain symbolic or we can let it remind us of the intensely personal relationship that we have with him.

God's heart is on fire with love for us. He doesn't need incense to remind himself of the intensity of his desires. However, God thoroughly approves of using incense for us to remind ourselves of the eternal truths on which we seek to build our lives.

What do YOU do when God says “No!”

*This is the **39th** article in a series called,
“Why do I pray these prayers at church?”
written by Bill Razgunas.*

What do YOU do when God says “No!”

When we pray for something and we don't receive it, what went wrong? We understand that John Quincy Adams said: “Duty is ours. Results are God's.” The scriptures say:

“On that day you will not question me about anything. Amen, amen, I say to you, whatever you ask the Father in my name he will give you.” John 16:23

Was Jesus exaggerating to make a point? If not, then we must investigate more deeply. In the book of Genesis 41 and 42, we learn that Jacob was living with his eleven son's in the land of Canaan when famine came upon the land. Did Jacob's prayer immediately resolve the problem of how to feed his family? No. Jacob legitimately could have felt disappointed with God. The reason why God refused is because he had a different plan in mind. Ultimately Jacob needed to learn God's world view and submit to it. God demanded patience from Jacob and his family.

Is God requiring patience of us with regard to our prayers? Yes! However, it isn't enough to say “We did our part, God needs to do his part when he gets around to it.” After all, Jacob needed to send his sons to beg for food from a foreign nation. Why was God treating Jacob's prayers with apparent disregard? We can ask God the same question: “Why are you seeming to

treat our prayers with disdain?” Regarding feeding Jacob's family, God was providing. The problem was that Jacob and his family couldn't see things from God's point of view until much further in the story. See Genesis chapters 44-46. We can't automatically see what God is doing when he says “No!” We must learn patience just like Jacob.

What do we do in the mean time? Just like Jacob, we must continue to believe that God will act on his heartfelt desires. Approximately 61% of the Catholics who voted, chose “YES” on proposal 3. How do the rest of us respond? I believe that we need to listen to each other more. A heartfelt concern that I've heard from one Pro-Choice Catholic was: “Is your Pro-Life lens too focused on legislative reform? Does making something illegal, make people righteous?” I am Pro-Life. At the same time, I have to admit that the question about legislative reform is a valid question. How are we to become better at communicating our faith? What are we doing to communicate the hope of salvation through Jesus Christ our Lord to others? Are we hope filled individuals because of He who is at work in us?

I've noticed that I have the same sinful tendencies before I vote as I do after. If we achieve legislative reform and abortion is illegal, this doesn't mean that God's process of sanctification in us has changed one iota. Have you demonstrated MORE faith, hope and love as a result of participating in an election? If not, then we need to look to our Lord for his help in becoming the holy people he wants us to be.

[Possibly published ?]

Bring Christ with you when you come to church

*This is the **38th** article in a series called,*

"Why do I pray these prayers at church?"

written by Bill Razgunas.

Bring Christ with you when you come to church

Bring Christ with you when you come to church on Sunday. The easiest way to do this is to avoid leaving Christ behind when you go home after mass. This is possible because it is in God's heart to walk with you every step of each day. God's heart is filled with a burning desire to begin spending the rest of eternity with you **starting today**. Listen to the Eucharistic prayers with an open mind. This excerpt is from Eucharistic Prayer 4:

And you so loved the world, Father most holy, that in the fullness of time you sent your Only Begotten Son to be our Savior. Made incarnate by the Holy Spirit and born of the Virgin Mary, he shared our human nature in all things but sin. To the poor he proclaimed the good news of salvation, to prisoners, freedom, and to the sorrowful of heart, joy.

To accomplish your plan, he gave himself up to death, and, rising from the dead, he destroyed death and restored life. And that we might live no longer for ourselves but for him who died and rose again for us, he sent the Holy Spirit from you, Father, as the first fruits for those who believe, so that, bringing to perfection his work in the world, he might sanctify creation to the full.

I've rewritten parts of the above prayer:

And you so loved *me*, Father most holy, that in the fullness of time you sent your Only Begotten Son to be *my* Savior. Made incarnate by the Holy Spirit and born of the Virgin Mary, he shared *my* human nature in all things but sin. *Where I am* poor he proclaimed the good news of salvation *to me*, *where I am* a prisoner *to Satan's lies* he spoke words of freedom, and *where I am*

sorrowful deep in my heart, he spoke words of joy.

To accomplish your plan, he gave himself up to death *for me*, and, rising from the dead, he destroyed death and restored life. And that *I* might live no longer for *myself* but for him who died and rose again for *me*, he sent the Holy Spirit from you, Father, as the first fruits for us who believe, so that, bringing to perfection his work in the world and in my life, he might sanctify creation to the full *even as he has sanctified me*.

Do you see what I've changed? If necessary reread it watching for the italicized words. Do you see the God's love for you in this? If you already do see the loving hand of the Father, don't bother reading more.

Finally, live like God is a loving Father all week long. Another way to say this is "Live the Eucharistic Prayers each day." His joyful salvation will grow in you till it is like a mighty river flowing from your heart. When you return to mass next time, he will come with you because he lives inside you. This is what he longs for!

PRAYER FOR OUR MEN: Father, please help our men to hear the words of **Jesus the man** when they hear the Eucharistic prayers. Jesus understands what it is like to be a man. While Jesus' words were directed to all men and women, some of our men feel like "I've done my part as a man. The rest is up to the women." Help our men to experience the joy filled life Jesus spoke of in the Eucharistic prayers!

[Possibly published ?]

“God helps those who help themselves.”, Satan’s lie

*This is the **37th** article in a series called,
“Why do I pray these prayers at church?”
written by Bill Razgunas.*

“God helps those who help themselves.”, Satan’s lie

As we participate in the Mass we bring the problems that we face in our lives with us. Let's say that we come to church distracted with problems with our income tax and we place them “on the altar.” This is an expression of faith that God will take care of us. We go to Holy Communion believing that Christ is present. Then we go home and face our need to complete our income tax. The faith that we had at church seems ludicrous now. “God helps those who help themselves.” Does this mean that God only helps us at church? Look at 2 Corinthians 6:2

For he says: *“In an acceptable time I heard you, and on the day of salvation I helped you.”*

Behold, now is a very acceptable time; behold, now is the day of salvation.

“Now” is the time of God’s opportunity to act in our life. You may say “That means that there is no time in which we are outside God’s opportunity to act.” That is right. The window of time in which God’s grace pursues us doesn’t change from when we are receiving the Eucharist and any time afterwards. That is why it’s untrue to say “If we don’t take care of ourselves, God isn’t going to help us.”

What rules demand our attention when we go to Holy Communion? Here are a few:

- Don’t be too close to the person in front of you in line! Remember COVID 19.
- Stretch out your arms more when receiving the host to keep enough space due to COVID 19.
- If there are too many people in line for the precious blood, don’t get in line.
- Be mindful of others as you seek to merge with them returning to your pews.

- Do you remember where you sat?
Don’t pass your row accidentally.
- Wait by your pew if someone else needs to get in first.

I need to pay attention to these things to be considerate toward others. This isn’t an exhaustive list! Sometimes despite my best efforts I get back to my seat and realize that I went through the whole process in “automatic.” For me, going to Holy Communion in “automatic” means that I was in a totally passive mode. Being passive isn’t evil. However, it’s a low target and I like to aim higher when approaching the Lord.

Our spiritual father Abraham expressed his faith in God by being willing to offer his son up in sacrifice. His faith wasn’t expressed as a sacrificial **symbol** as part of his daily prayer time. His faith in God touched on all aspects of his life. We believe in Christ’s presence in the Eucharist. Subsequently Christ must touch all aspects of our lives. If Jesus lives in us as we receive Holy Communion, then how much more does he live in us after we leave church?

God does help those who help themselves. **However, we believe that God also shows his power in our weakness. If we are weak, this means that we cannot help ourselves. It is at those times that God glorifies himself the most.** Trusting God to bring good out of our feeble attempts to stay focused is a choice that he will honor. Remember that he said that he would be with us always.

[Possibly published 2022-SEPT ???]

The role of piety and rituals

This is the 36th article in a series called,
“Why do I pray these prayers at church?”
written by Bill Razgunas.

The role of piety and rituals

If I genuflect when I first enter church and look around me wondering if anyone shows better respect than I do, is that okay? If I bring my heart and mind to mass ready to say the prayers perfectly, do I accomplish the intended results? If anyone was watching me, did they notice how respectful I was when taking the host during Holy Communion? Am I better off than others just because I have participated in the rituals? Answers: The piety that we show when entering church isn't a competition. Saying the prayers “perfectly,” isn't as important as remembering who we are speaking to. If I am giving a lot of attention to how impeccable my Eucharistic signs of respect are, my attention can be spent in a better way by focusing on the person that commands our contemplation.

I am looking at two mindsets: a fleshy (Greek word *sarx*) mindset and the mind of faithful disciples of Christ. BOTH CAN APPEAR THE SAME FROM THE OUTSIDE. Both have rituals. What is the difference? One difference is that the *sarx* mindset believes that piety and the observation of rituals have one and only one “best” way to be performed. On the other hand, as disciples of Christ, we don't believe that the bread and wine become Christ's body and blood because we enunciated the prayers just right. It doesn't become more like the true Body and Blood if we say the prayers in Latin. If the priest had led a sinless life leading up to the mass, there is no more of Christ's

presence on the altar than if he had fallen into sin right before mass. What happens on the altar is a function of God's gift to us. We don't earn it. Subsequently let's focus on “How powerfully can we experience God's work in our lives during mass and after we leave?”

One of the biggest ways that the devil lies to us at Mass is “You've heard all that before.” In order to counter this, we seek to investigate pious practices and rituals to see the meaning that we may have misplaced. Mass in general and specifically the Eucharist are incredibly rich feasts to foster a healthy soul. I feel like there is more going on at mass than any human being could ever focus on. It is good news that it ISN'T left up to our human abilities. The Holy Spirit has been given to us so that we can join in Paul's prayer for the Ephesians as it still applies to us today. He prays that “the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory, may give you a spirit of wisdom and revelation resulting in knowledge of him. May the eyes of [your] hearts be enlightened, that you may know what is the hope that belongs to his call, what are the riches of glory in his inheritance among the holy ones, and what is the surpassing greatness of his power for us who believe, in accord with the exercise of his great might,” See Ephesians chapter 1.

We have an exciting God who cannot be adequately honored and respected by our actions. Our piety and rituals provide a good way for us to do the best we can do.

[Possibly published 2022-AUG]

I am alone, Satan's Lie

*This is the **35th** article in a series called,
"Why do I pray these prayers at church?"
written by Bill Razgunas.*

I am alone, Satan's Lie

If you arrive at mass feeling abandoned by God and believe that you are truly alone in this life, you are in danger of being trapped by the devil. How can being at mass help? Ask yourself "Have I parroted the words of the mass so that they become meaningless phrases that I repeat out of duty?" Or even worse, "Have I stopped speaking out the responses altogether?" This can be the devil's highway into our spiritual lives to perpetuate his lies. Look at the words of the Gloria: "For you alone are the Holy One, you alone are Lord, you alone are the Most High, Jesus Christ, with the Holy Spirit, in the glory of God the Father." You may be asking yourselves "How is this supposed to help?" The answer is that we don't proclaim the Gloria because of what God did in some remote land among people that didn't even talk English. The words of the Gloria, flow from our lips because of who God is to us RIGHT NOW! He is the Holy One, Lord and Most High while at the same time being fully and completely in our hearts and minds. He is present in our lives. He doesn't become less by shrinking down so he will fit!

If we have fallen for the lie that we are truly alone in this life, we must look for help in getting free. First of all we must ask God to set us free. Paying attention to the words at mass is one tool at our disposal. We can also read the scriptures and choose to put our faith in God. Sometimes the devil's lies have taken a deep foothold

and we must seek help from a priest or another mature believer. This may involve counseling and prayer. However, some of the simplest ways that God works to destroy the works of the devil can be through common companionship. This can be gained through participating in Catholic service groups or sharing groups.

A prayer for the men in our lives: Father in heaven, help the men in our lives deal with the vulnerability that they face. This vulnerability comes about because their ego tells them that they can tough-it-out and never need to depend on others. This works part of the time. However, it will always disappoint in the long run. Some of our married men deal with their solitariness by getting emotional support from their spouses. Problems happen when our men are feeling like they need support at the same time that they are called on to give of their strength. Some of our men have tried to get support from other men only to find that they are treated as effeminate or even gay. A few of our men have found improved relationships with other men. However, the need for more men to experience this is great! Please send your Holy Spirit on those who are most open to this and make the way clear for them to experience a fuller sense of what it means to be masculine. Amen

If you need some help finding a men's group, please give me a call at 734-546-6445.

2022-AUG

This is the **34th** article in a series called,
"Why do I pray these prayers at church?"
written by Bill Razgunas.

Bill's group: My life outside church.

Bill's group: My life outside church.

Bill's group is approximately 10 men with developmental handicaps that qualify as "high functioning." "High functioning" means that they can live independently with some help from others. We include ages from 18 up. Most of us are Roman Catholic. Here is a little bit about it:

In Bill's group we recognize that the things that make each of us unique also includes the things that we don't like about each other. This forms the basis of learning to love one another. One of our regular activities is to talk about the weekly homily, this helps us to fix the homily in memory as well as to understand how to apply this to our lives. We also pray together at the end of the day on ZOOM. Of course we love to do things just to have fun.

We choose to follow Christ even though we couldn't always say what that means in the big picture. Since following Christ encompasses so much, we accept that we must challenge each other to continue to improve our lives. We choose to live chaste lives. We will achieve this through a continuous, permanent conversion which, **advances gradually** as we incorporate all that God commands of us and as we respond to his overwhelming love." See *FAMILIARIS CONSORTIO para 9*

If you would like to learn more about Bill's group, contact Scott Wright at swright@stfrancisa2.org

Eucharist: How do we think about it?

This is the 33rd article in a series called,
“Why do I pray these prayers at church?”
written by Bill Razgunas.

Eucharist: How do we think about it?

I am empowered to believe in the fullness of Christ's body, blood, soul, and divinity by the Holy Spirit within me. Each opportunity to receive Holy Communion is complimented by the many moments, BIG and small, where I encounter God throughout my daily life. When I encounter Him, it is not “presence” in the sense of the Eucharist. However these encounters are God's *actual* graces given to me and are ***just as real*** as the Eucharist. Here I quote from the US Catholic Catechism for Adults: “God continues to assist us by many helps that are called *actual graces*. Thus we have the ability to live and act under the guidance and light of the gifts of the Holy Spirit.” (See Ch. 15, Page 193 Copyright 2006)

Following are three possible world views that are useful for reviewing how we think about the Eucharist.

1) Perhaps the most common way of looking at the Eucharist is that it is something that we do at church. When church is over, the Eucharist is over. When we exit the church doors, we leave the Eucharist behind. We hold to the fact that the Eucharist is Christ's body, blood, soul, and divinity. This knowledge is dear to us and we know that we will return to this knowledge when we return to church next time.

2) The next way of looking at the Eucharist is the power cookie view. Do you

remember what happens to the ghost gang when PAC-Man eats a snack pellet? In this view, consuming the Eucharist is like PAC-Man when he consumes a power cookie. The Eucharist is a source of great power to live the Christian life. However, this power feels like it tapers off given the eroding effects of the world, the flesh and the devil. Is this power lost until the next time we go to Holy Communion?

3) The last way of looking at the Eucharist is that it is a gift that extends into all aspects of life and beyond. The emphasis here is that the presence of God in our lives doesn't change. Our perception of his presence certainly changes! However, God's gift of his presence doesn't get withdrawn as we confront the world, the flesh and the devil. When we get in line to receive him in the Eucharist, we embrace Him as lover and the beloved come together. We embrace him since he was already within us, and unite ourselves wholly to him. He never left since the last time we shared the Eucharist. This way of looking at the Eucharist augments our understanding that we are temples in which the presence of God dwells. Since we live with Christ within us, we have excellent reason to abandon habits that find their roots in bad habits. This viewpoint also directly impacts the way we relate to others who have also partaken in the Eucharist. They also are temples of God's presence.

No matter what world view you use, the Holy Spirit provides the power to help us maintain our belief in the fullness of Christ's body, blood, soul and divinity in the Eucharist.

Eucharist: Source and Summit of our Faith

*This is the **32th** article in a series called,*

"Why do I pray these prayers at church?"

written by Bill Razgunas.

Eucharist: Source and Summit of our Faith

If you are already confident that the Eucharist is Christ's body, blood, soul, and divinity, do you need convincing that most of your time will be spent outside church? I believe that the most difficult question for each of us to answer is: **"How do I carry the Pascal mystery out into the world?"** You may feel like I just changed the topic on you. On one hand, I am talking about the Eucharist. On the other hand, I am talking about the world's need to hear about the Pascal mystery. What connects the two topics? We participate in the Pascal Mystery when we go to Holy Communion. Am I saying that we need to go home and tell our neighbors that we went to Holy Communion? No! Am I saying that we should go home and tell our neighbors that we celebrated the Pascal mystery today at church? No! We shouldn't go out and tell the world using the words "Pascal mystery!" The word "Pascal" is not a typical English word. Avoid using it when sharing your faith with an unbeliever. "Mystery" is a typical English word. However, we don't use it in the same manner as the English speaking world. At church we use the word mystery to mean that something that has been revealed by God. God revealed his plan to rescue all mankind by sending Jesus to die for our sins and to lead us into new life through Christ's resurrection. We **SHOULD tell the world that God has revealed his plan** to rescue all mankind by sending **Jesus** to die for our sins and lead us into new life through Christ's resurrection. However, **how do we do this?** Look at the scripture about the Ethiopian eunuch and Philip:

"Then the (Ethiopian) eunuch said to Philip in reply, "I beg you, about whom is the prophet (Isaiah) saying this? About himself, or about someone else?" Then Philip opened his mouth and, beginning with this scripture passage, he proclaimed Jesus to him." Acts 8:34,35

Philip was participating in the Pascal mystery in this passage. God wants to use you to proclaim the good news of Jesus' death and resurrection in the same way that Philip did when he was talking with the Ethiopian eunuch. **You will know when it is time to open your mouth.** By doing this, you will proclaim that Jesus is the source and summit of your faith. Hint: My ability to respond to God's prompting is vastly improved by one thing. It is where I have chosen to open my mouth when the time presents itself. There is an analogy here between one's mouth and a bow for shooting arrows. Making up my mind ahead of time is like having an arrow notched on a string ready to fire. This way I am ready to serve God. By doing this, I am much more likely to open my mouth and share about Jesus when I am supposed to.

[Possibly published 2022-JULY]

Lord, hear our prayer

*This is the **31st** article in a series called,
"Why do I pray these prayers at church?"
written by Bill Razgunas.*

Lord, hear our prayer

At the time for the intercessions we say "Lord, hear our prayer!" We asked him to hear us. After we finish, we have confidence that God heard our prayer. The case is closed. Right? We trust in God's providence. Since God is good, we ask him to do this good thing! Its easy to imagine that we are tossing these prayers to God while at church. I don't know about you but I don't spare a thought about the things we prayed for after we have moved on to the Liturgy of the Eucharist.

How does God make believers out of unbelievers and what is our role? The mass is well suited to help those who already believe in him to encounter Christ again! The mass does not meet unbelievers where they are at. It is actually quite confusing to them! How often do unbelievers witness the Prayers Of the Faithful and subsequently feel moved to repent as they see God's presence among us? Some of you may be saying that Christ's Eucharistic presence has moved unbelievers to repent! While this is no doubt true, it is very rare! Christ's presence in the Eucharist is a sign to believers not unbelievers. Unbelievers are supposed to leave mass before we begin the liturgy of the Eucharist. They don't understand it. How does God broadcast his desire to save all men and women? Where does this happen?

One of the main ways that God confronts the unbeliever is when a Catholic Christian says "May I pray for a miracle to happen right now?" When God answers the

prayer, the unbeliever's lack of faith is exposed and the possibility of repentance becomes real. Did you know that it is God's intention that this happen regularly in our lives? Yes, God will do this in you! You can tell if God is leading you to pray with an unbeliever. Watch for a stronger-than-normal desire to see an answered prayer in their life! This is the way God works. He gives us the desire to do his will. What if you make a mistake and God wasn't giving you the holy desire to see God act in their lives? Don't worry! God always responds generously! Ask God to use you in this way. He will do it because it is already in his heart.

[Published 2022-JUNE 19th]

May Almighty Have Mercy On Us!

*This is the **30th** article in a series called,*

"Why do I pray these prayers at church?"

written by Bill Razgunas.

May Almighty Have Mercy On Us!

May the almighty God have mercy on us, forgive us our sins, and bring us to everlasting life.

When the priest prays this prayer at mass, does God forgive us even though we haven't gone to confession? Since the priest isn't giving us absolution, what good is this prayer? What foundation are we drawing from? Is the priest saying that he believes that Jesus can forgive sins just because each of us asks this of God?

The quick answers to these questions are: Yes God forgives venial sins without going to confession. The good in this is that we can use this same prayer as we go about our daily routines. The foundation we are drawing from is that Jesus died for our sins, the debt that we owed has been canceled, the power of sin has been defeated. Finally, the priest is saying that Jesus is ready to forgive all non-mortal sins as soon as we express regret and willingness to do good. (Jesus is ready to forgive mortal sins also. The Sacrament of Reconciliation is required in that case.) "While it is not necessary to confess venial sins (to a priest), the Church strongly recommends this practice." United States Catholic Catechism for Adults 2006 page 245

Why would we even wonder about whether small sins can be forgiven by simply asking? Have we become accustomed to going to confession to justify God's choice to save us? By going to the Sacrament of Reconciliation, we actively show that we

regret our sins and demonstrate our willingness to change. Being active in this regard is exemplary. At the same time, God's actions need no justification! Let's receive God's gift of forgiveness as it is truly intended. It is God's free choice

"May the almighty God have mercy on us, forgive us our sins, and bring us to everlasting life." God's answer to all of these requests is "Yes." Jesus says "Of course I will have mercy on you, Yes, I forgive your sins! Yes, I long to bring you to the place that I have prepared for you for all eternity."

[Possibly published 2022-JUNE 12th]

He takes away the sins of the world

*This is the **29th** article in a series called,
"Why do I pray these prayers at church?"
written by Bill Razgunas.*

He takes away the sins of the world

The first time I wrote about this prayer, early in this series, I looked at the emotions that it evoked. "Lamb of God who takes away the sins of the world, have mercy on us." Recently, I was talking to an 80 year old Catholic man. He was sharing about a physical handicap that had plagued him all his life. Since he and his father had the same handicap, was it his father's fault? To him, this handicap was evidence that somebody had sinned! I asked him "Are you saying that Jesus doesn't take away all the sins of the world?" He explained that Jesus only took away some of the sins of the world. This is the only way that he could explain God's failure to answer his prayers.

When God takes away our sins, **he places us into a right relationship with him** as part of the favor he bestows on us in Christ. Can God bring the consequences of our sin back? Of course! However, please think this through. How were our sins removed to begin with? Was it anything that we did? No! It was because of the favor bestowed on us in Christ. How do we find ourselves excluded from the right relationship which was given to us? I can only answer from my own experiences with handicaps. Sometimes I want to reject the way that God takes care of me. This rejection takes the form "Since you aren't answering my prayer, someone must have sinned!" The problem is that link between the targeted sin and our suffering may be completely false. This false link is often the

basis for believing that we deserve to be condemned. When we suffer from condemnation over any sin in our lives, this flies in the face of God's favor for us. God's favor and our experience of condemnation are at odds. They cannot share the same place in our heart because they are mutually exclusive. Looking for help overcoming feelings of condemnation? Read the book **THE 10 BIGGEST LIES OF THE ENEMY** by Deacon Keith Strohman. You can buy a used copy from Amazon for as little as \$3.60

With regard to all handicaps, it's hard to accept our disadvantage while viewing the pleasure that typical people experience in such an effortless way. We don't see any good that can ever come of it. A mature believer can accept the handicap with the belief that God is all powerful and can bring good out of our misfortune. As we wait for him to bring the good about, let's avoid refusing his gift of a right relationship with God. Let's allow him to take away the sins of the world. At the same time, say "Lord, when you take away the sins of the world, take away my sins too!"

[Possibly published 2022-MAY]

Processions as a Type of Parade

*This is the **28th** article in a series called,*

"Why do I pray these prayers at church?"

written by Bill Razgunas.

Processions as a Type of Parade

What is the purpose of the priest's procession at the beginning of mass? What about the recession at the mass' end? There are plenty of questions one can ask. Is the main purpose of these actions to start and end mass? Are these actions meant to help prepare us for what comes next? Wouldn't it be simpler if the priest just walked down the aisle alone? Why carry the book with the gold cover? Why carry candles? What about noticing what type of cross or crucifix is on the pole carried at the front of the procession (recession)?

The beginning and end of mass are distracting and chaotic times. You may be struggling with the hymn book trying to find the correct song. If you found the right song, you are busy singing instead of watching the group parading down the aisle. At the end of mass, concern for navigating the crowd can occupy one's mind even before the last song has ended. All of these things are factors affecting why we find these times distracting. The most significant factor, however, is that very few people can see the procession (recession) because we are all **STANDING**. You might be able to see the cross on the pole if it is being held high enough.

To me, the processional and recession are more like "**parades**" than simple cues as to when the mass begins and ends. In this holy parade, Jesus takes the first place as we look at his cross at the head of the parade. If we let it, this can help us make the transition into and out of church

significant. Here is a great challenge: leave church while still being able to recall the bible readings and the homily. These events are part of the Liturgy of the Word. When you arrive at your car, check your memory. If you are like me, you will need to put a substantial amount of effort into recalling very many details once you get in your car.

Here is a website that offers more insight into the symbols included in the processions:

www.stfrancis2.com/mass-praising-processing

[which takes you to this]

<https://www.catholicdigest.com/amp/faith/the-mass-praising-processing/>

[Possibly published 2022-MAY 22]

The Value of Routine

*This is the **27th** article in a series called,
"Why do I pray these prayers at church?"
written by Bill Razgunas.*

The Value of Routine

The mass is full of powerful rituals. Rituals and routines have a lot in common.

Here is a quote about two people who shared the same routine:

"They knew things about each other without those things ever having been said, and they would have known them even if they'd never known each other. I suppose, on a basic level, that's what happened when you said the same prayers in the same order week after week—not because you knew them by heart, and not even because they had significance, but because it was a shared experience. Even if you were in different churches, in different states or different countries, the routine bound you one to the other. And once it did, and you knew you had that in common, you could make assumptions about each other, which was another way of sharing." Chapter 3 **A Dog Walks Into a Nursing Home** by Sue Halpern

The mass is a shared experience which can emphasize how much we have in common. The problem is slowing our lives down enough to appreciate this shared experience. How does the writer of this quote come to claim this bonding experience? It is in a nursing home where people have slowed down. They are waiting to die.

We don't have to wait till we are at death's door to hold onto this experience. Look around church the next time you are at mass. Everyone there is a **FAVORED**

candidate for eternal life. How do I know this? It is because Christ died and rose again for you. God has announced his favor. It is good news!

Paschal Joy

*This is the **26th** article in a series called,*
"Why do I pray these prayers at church?"
written by Bill Razgunas.

Paschal Joy

At Easter masses we hear: "Therefore overcome with paschal joy, every land, every people exults in your praise..."

What is paschal joy? Is it a feeling that we only have while we are at church? If we started a list of "holy emotions" would it go next to the peace of Christ and the fear of the Lord? Do we have to go to confession to experience paschal joy?

Paschal joy is the joy that comes with the knowledge of our salvation! Just to be clear, Catholics believe that we HAVE BEEN saved, that we ARE BEING saved and that we WILL BE saved. If you don't believe this then your Catholic faith has been worn down to the point that it is meaningless! Why? This is the message of Easter that Christ rose from the dead throwing open the gates of heaven. This is the message that brings great joy to all believers!

Is this a "holy emotion?" It is HOLY in the sense that we experience this more often and more deeply as we follow Christ. Is it an emotion? Yes. However, it is more than just a mood. I'm sure that a neurologist would say it is found in the part of our brains that includes all the behaviors and emotions that are necessary for survival. Pascal joy finds its home here. It is necessary for our survival. What is the relationship between these behaviors and emotions? There are times where we don't feel anything regarding the joy of salvation. It may be when we are in the throws of

temptation or just in the grind of daily life. The emotional response that includes paschal joy will evade us at times. However, if your life is seriously deprived of this joy then there is a problem. Talk to a priest or a mature Catholic to figure out what is going on. Is this the end of the story? What about the behavioral part necessary for survival? Behaviors like eating and feelings of hunger are also included in this part of the brain. I hope that you have learned to eat to take care of yourself even when you aren't hungry. The same applies to paschal joy. When we don't feel this emotional response we all must still favor those behaviors that foster our survival. We choose to behave like Christ's salvation is the most important part of our life even when we don't feel like it.

Confession can be very helpful to support us in experiencing paschal joy. It can be very helpful to fend off any feelings of condemnation. Preferably the role of paschal joy should permeate our whole life not only when we go to confession. However, if the Sacrament of Reconciliation is the main place to experience this joy, then that is a great starting place.

[Possibly published 2022-MAY 1]

Lord I am not worthy

*This is the **25th** article in a series called,*

"Why do I pray these prayers at church?"

written by Bill Razgunas.

Lord I am not worthy

"Lord I am not worthy that you should enter under my roof, but only say the word that my soul should be healed."

We pass through this prayer very quickly. Is it just a liturgical transition that we must get through in order to go to Communion? Is it one last opportunity to beat one's breast before we receive our Lord in the Eucharist? Is its purpose to forestall any problems with receiving the Eucharist with an unhealed soul? What does it mean for our soul to be "healed"?

This prayer is taken almost word for word from the Gospel story about the healing of the centurion's slave. In the scripture the centurion says: Lord, I am not worthy to have you enter under my roof; only say the word and my servant will be healed. For I too am a person subject to authority, with soldiers subject to me. And I say to one, 'Go,' and he goes; and to another, 'Come here,' and he comes; and to my slave, 'Do this,' and he does it." See Luke 7:8,9

The centurion isn't taking one last chance to beat his breast because he is worried about Jesus entering his home. He is aware that he is NOT a member of God's chosen people. While accepting the sharp distinction between Jesus' ministry to the Jews and his own pagan ancestry, he is being bold about asking a favor from Jesus. He makes a surprising statement calling Jesus "Lord." He would use the same word when referring to his lord, the emperor. The centurion is expressing the existence of a powerful and tacit relationship with Jesus. This relationship is not being negotiated based on the hope that Jesus will heal the centurion's servant. The healing power flows through the relationship that Jesus has with the centurion.

When we say this prayer we are joining the centurion in acknowledging the powerful relationship that we have with Jesus. Unlike the centurion we don't need to feel that our request belongs to those prayers coming from "outside" the people of God. We are part of Christ's body. How much more intimate can that get? By regularly

saying this prayer **we are reminding ourselves** that this relationship is a vital part of our lives. By saying this prayer at mass we confirm that it is our intent to nurture and strengthen our relationship with Christ. We don't need to pray this prayer out of fear of the darkness of sin. Our healing is an ongoing transformation. "All of us, gazing with unveiled face on the glory of the Lord, are being transformed into the same image from glory to glory, as from the Lord who is the Spirit." 2 Cor 3:18

Taking God's mercy home after church

*This is the **24th** article in a series called,
"Why do I pray these prayers at church?"
written by Bill Razgunas.*

What if God "answered" liturgical prayers?

[For 2022- APRIL 10, 17 or 24]

What if God "answered" liturgical prayers?

Most of us believe that God hears us when we intercede for the things that we ask for. The prayers said during the Liturgy of the Eucharist appear to be in a different class. These prayers are only said by the priest. Is hearing these prayers at mass the only means through which we can experience the graces that come with regular church attendance?

Would the flow of grace from the remembrance of these liturgical prayers cease if the physical ability to have mass temporarily stopped? It might be helpful to look at our individual experiences of COVID 19? How was your experience of spirituality during the physical isolation due to the COVID pandemic? Was God handicapped when the faithful were unable to attend the mass? Did your spirituality go on hold? What is the relationship between church attendance and our awareness of God's time of opportunity?

During the worst of COVID, I missed all the people I knew at church. I also acutely felt the isolation from those who lived in my apartment building. I was frustrated. However, my prayer time was just as active as ever. I also figured out ways that I could reach out to those who needed support and encouragement using the phone or internet. Spiritually, I didn't experience any interruption of God's work.

Do you remember where scripture mentions how the Father glorifies the Son and the Son glorifies the Father? See John chapter 17. Do you think that this mutual interaction ended with the resurrection? No! It persists today and will persist for eternity. In our daily life, this eternal gift giving between Jesus and the Father becomes felt. Jesus answers our intercessory prayers in order to glorify the Father. The Father hears our prayers because he longs to glorify his Son.

How does this relate to the Eucharistic prayers? The Eucharistic prayers capture this interaction between the Father and the Son. We are drawn into this because we are IN Christ! We are part of the way that Christ glorifies the Father! This happens whether we are able to celebrate the Eucharist or not. The fulfillment of our liturgical prayers flows from the fact that the Holy Spirit is already at work in us. The liturgical prayers help shape our awareness of the work of the Holy Spirit in our daily lives outside of church. God the Father is always about the business of answering the Eucharistic prayers. He never grows tired of doing this because he loves to glorify his Son!

Is the work of the Holy Spirit feeling blunted or ineffective in your life? Ask him to renew his Holy Spirit within you.

[Possibly published 2022- APRIL ???]

[For 2022- APRIL 10, 17 or 24]

Tears of Joy

This is the 23rd article in a series called,

"Why do I pray these prayers at church?"

written by Bill Razgunas.

Tears of Joy

What do we offer when we present sacrifice to God?

Therefore, O Lord, as we celebrate the memorial of the blessed Passion, the Resurrection from the dead, and the glorious ascension into heaven of Christ, your son, our Lord, we your servants and your holy people, offer to your glorious majesty from the gifts that you have given us, this pure victim, this holy victim, this spotless victim, the Bread of eternal life and the chalice of everlasting salvation. (See Eucharistic Prayer I)

We are SO used to hearing this prayer that we stop listening to it. Who are we offering to the Father? It is Jesus. How did we get Jesus in the first place? The Father sent him to us. So we are offering Jesus to the Father while Jesus is ONLY ours because the Father sent him. We are giving to the Father what came from the Father. What kind of sacrifice is this? Why isn't the Father complaining that we are just giving to him what is already his? Suppose that you have been granted the privilege of meeting the President of the United States. On the way there you decide to give him some flowers. He graciously accepts the flowers and then comments "These flowers are remarkably similar to the ones in my office down the hall." You've been found out and admit that there are the very same ones. You took the flowers out of his office. You have given the President

what is already his! I feel uncomfortable with this kind of sacrifice.

I'm confident that I don't fully understand the depth of self giving that goes on amid the persons of the Trinity. I'm sure that it puts our tradition of giving gifts completely to shame. So the Father and Jesus have been giving themselves to the other since before the beginning of time. When Jesus became man, he didn't temporarily stop his self giving. However, something new did start happening. Jesus included us in the process. We became part of his gift as well as part of the process of giving. We become part of the gift as we live out lives "through him, with him and in him." This living out our lives accompanies the knowledge that Jesus is the vine that we are attached to. John 15:5 says "I am the vine; you are the branches. If you remain in me and I in you, you will bear much fruit; apart from me you can do nothing." We become extensions of Jesus. This becomes so profoundly true that when Jesus gives himself to the Father he includes us in himself. Jesus is the gift and subsequently so are we. The depth of his love for us isn't limited to this! Just as Jesus includes us in his gift to the Father, the Father allows us to give Jesus (and ourselves) when we come to offer sacrifice to him. So we become both gift and giver in the same way Jesus has been since the beginning of time.

It is in this light that we see the Eucharist. Giver and gift become inseparable by his own choice. What tears of joy shall flood our eyes someday when we perceive the wonders of what he has done "through him, with him and in him."

[Possibly published 2022- FEBRUARY or MARCH ???] [Scott Received 2022-01-31 -A- The Mass is boring and irrelevant]

The Mass is boring and irrelevant

*This is the 22nd article in a series called,
"Why do I pray these prayers at church?"
written by Bill Razgunas.*

The Mass is boring and irrelevant

Please think about this. What about the mass is boring and irrelevant?

If the mass is boring or irrelevant to many people, how come some people are getting a lot out of it? One answer is: the people who love the mass are those who are already in love with Jesus. Loving Jesus doesn't automatically make mass interesting. However, if your relationship with Jesus has grown cold, chances are good that you are coming to mass out of a sense of duty. Duty is good. However, duty alone is COLD. Warmth and relevance can flow from ones love of God. If your love of God has grown cold, ask for prayer from a mature Catholic that you know.

Also, check these questions out. They might help you know where your negative feelings are coming from. (1) Is the God that you worship intimately involved in the little things of daily life? (2) Does a mature Catholic believe that there is more to our salvation than being good to other people? (3) Is there anything more important than pursuit of happiness? (4) Do you believe that people already possess innate knowledge of how to be good so they don't need to pester God so often in prayer? (5) Is it really necessary to believe in a God that would send anyone to hell?

If you answered "No" to any of these five questions, then I bet you will eventually

come to a place where you consider the mass boring and irrelevant. Feeling this way can lead you further from Christ and his church. If you answered "No" consider the following statements:

- (1) God loves you and wants to show himself to you in the little things of daily life.
- (2) All Christians believe that being in a right relationship with God is of utmost importance. Only then can we really be good to other people.
- (3) Holiness is more important than happiness. We will not find happiness if we make happiness our primary goal.
- (4) Even good people can fail to know how to do the right thing as they pursue holiness. We need God's help and we need each other.
- (5) Unrepented mortal sin will send a person to hell. Regarding smaller sins, I once met a person who had developed an "appetite" for doing wrong things and not getting caught. Some of these things were clearly sinful while others were just stupid. He said "Do you know why I do wrong things? BECAUSE I CAN!" Its like he enjoyed being defiant as he did each wrong thing. The BIG picture is this: It is a blessing that we can't imagine how anybody can choose hell over heaven. God tells us that hell has been prepared for the devil and his angels. Hell is real.

This article addresses some of the most common reasons for feelings of irrelevance and boredom. Don't despair if your experience has different roots. God is there to help each of us every step of the way. God will help you realize how interesting and relevant a life of holiness is.

[Possibly published 2022- MARCH ???]

[Scott Received 2022-02-28 — You might want to put it before other articles since I mention the Synod on Mission. Input from the laity ends on April 29, 2022.]

The Synod on Mission

*This is the **21st** article in a series called,
"Why do I pray these prayers at church?"
written by Bill Razgunas.*

The Synod on Mission

Where is God when we leave mass? He is everywhere, pressing in from all sides. At the same time, he hides most of the overwhelming aspects of his nature! Maybe you feel that you would believe in him more if he would just SHOW HIMSELF more plainly. The problem is that the MORE he shows himself the more restrained we can become. It is hard to choose freely in the face of overwhelming power. So how does God resolve this problem of showing himself powerfully while preserving our free will to choose? The answer is easiest to see with regard to evangelism.

When we evangelize, we become a physical expression of the nearly invisible God! At these times, God allows us to make it particularly easy for him to manifest himself. He will show himself as we show him to the world around us. THE FUN PART IS THAT WE GET TO SEE GOD'S POWER AT THESE TIMES. An example will help. I was sharing about God's love to Joe, a friend of mine at work. When we went to our cars to leave for lunch, Joe quickly came back telling me that his car wouldn't start. We tried using my car to jump start his, nothing happened. I had a spiritual sense that God wanted to help him. (Please don't exaggerate the strength of this spiritual sense. It is less than a whisper.) When I asked Joe if I could say a prayer (out loud) to get his car started, he agreed. Please notice that my free will is

expressed by my request to pray together. I also freely choose to pray while the evidence for God's power is very small. What happened next? Nothing! I felt embarrassed after we prayed and nothing happened. In these times, I've learned to resist the inclination to be angry with God for not showing up and doing something. This also is an opportunity to express my free will: I do this by trusting in him that he will give himself glory. About 30 minutes later Joe called and said that God answered our prayer. Joe was amazed at how quickly the tow truck came and the short time it took to get his car running again. God answered our prayer, just not in the way that I envisioned. If I had refused to be open to praying for Joe's car, the day would have finished up as any other day. Through our answered prayer we were both drawn into deeper relationship with God. In doing this, we freely chose to be part of his plan of salvation. Our free will was maintained and God demonstrated his power! It is like a celestial balance maintained by God. On one side of the scale is our free will. On the other side is God's free will. The more we freely choose to have faith in him, the more he is free to show off his power. We consume God in the Eucharist. Subsequently, by following him, God's will and ours are totally aligned. The effect is always that we receive more than God takes from us.

We only have till April 29, 2022 to provide our feedback to the bishop regarding the Synod on Mission. He is asking us to collect and share information on how the Catholic Church is doing with regard to our individual outreach to others. In my experience, asking others about their experiences with the Church can be a time of loving exchange about God. This is basically about evangelism. Go to <https://www.dioceseoflansing.org/office-bis>

[hop/synod-conversation-guide](#) It is a helpful guide for reaching out to others.

[Possibly published 2022- FEBRUARY or
MARCH ???]

[Scott Received 2022-01-31 -B- A living sacrifice]

I had to create a sorter / printable link ... for your article 20 and I changed the page number... where you write...

"Go on line and search for the "Order of the Mass."

(<https://www.stfrancisa2.com/Order-of-Mass> & See page 35.

...instead of, "Look for sheet 14)

(<https://www.catholicbishops.ie/wp-content/uploads/2011/02/Order-of-Mass.pdf> Look for sheet 14)

A living sacrifice

*This is the **20th** article in a series called,*

"Why do I pray these prayers at church?"

written by Bill Razgunas.

20. A living sacrifice

Look at the Eucharistic Prayers in the Mass. Go on line and search for the "Order of the Mass."

(<https://www.catholicbishops.ie/wp-content/uploads/2011/02/Order-of-Mass.pdf> Look

for sheet 14) What do you feel when reading the Eucharistic Prayers? On the first pass you may feel "My goodness, am I supposed to feel something when hearing these prayers?" OR "I've heard these prayers 1,000 times in my lifetime. It's so repetitive!" Read **"Look, O Lord, upon the Sacrifice which you yourself have provided for your Church and grant in your loving kindness to all who partake of this one Bread and one Chalice that, gathered into one body by the Holy Spirit, they may truly become a living sacrifice in Christ to the praise of your glory.** It's in the Eucharistic Prayer IV.

Notice the reference to being a **living sacrifice**. This is an "echo" from Romans 12:1,2 "I urge you therefore, brothers, by the mercies of God, to offer your bodies as a **living sacrifice**, holy and pleasing to God, your spiritual worship. Do not conform yourselves to this age but **be transformed by the renewal of your mind**, that you may discern what is the will of God, what is good and pleasing and perfect." The

sacrifice of the mass is where we communally join ourselves to God's will. At the same time, there is no conflict with the fact that we work out our individual piety and worship him privately as we live our lives 24 hours a day. God's work in each of us brings this about. Our effort to cooperate with the renewal of our minds is brought about through, with and in him. I can hear you saying "We want to know HOW!" There are as many different ways of bringing this about as there are people on this planet.

There is one common factor in all of our lives. God asks us to believe that he deeply wants to transform each of us by the renewal of our minds. You may feel that this is pretty self evident. However, as we muddle through our days, the temptation will be to believe that he doesn't really care that much. We may even feel angry at how messy he allows our lives to become. However, our part is played out by holding onto our hope that he will complete his promise to us. He is faithful and he will do it!

[Possibly published 2022-JANUARY 23 or
FEBRUARY ???]

Taking God's mercy home after church

This is the **19th** article in a series called,
"Why do I pray these prayers at church?"
written by Bill Razgunas.

Taking God's mercy home after church

This is a snippet from a conversation with my friend Bob:

Bob and I were talking about the Gloria, prayed at the beginning of mass. During this prayer we pray for God's mercy. I posed this question "Do you ever asked God for mercy in your prayers at home." He said "Just the fact that I'm talking to him outside church means that I am asking, the busiest person in the universe, to pay attention to me for a minute. Why would I need to use the word mercy when I talk to God? Isn't my respect for how busy he is enough for him?" Look at Bob's words here. The first thing to notice is that Bob's respect for God's busyness is something he gives to God. Mercy is different because it is something that God gives to us. I told Bob that he was attempting to use respect and mercy interchangeably. Then I asked Bob if God is quick to find fault with us. He said that He didn't know because he was basically a good person. I asked him "Why do we say the prayer *I confess to Almighty God that I have greatly sinned?*" How does this "greatly sinning" stand up to the fact that we are good people? Bob didn't see the conflict. He said "I am a sinner at church. I am a good guy everywhere else." While being entertained on-line, Bob was very accustomed to suspend disbelief. Bob believed that the movie or video game wasn't real. However, the movie producers and video game designers don't have any responsibility to help us separate after

being immersed in their simulated worlds. Bob's world contained enough movie and game entertainment to influence his answer to the question "Do I need God's mercy?" He was having trouble with seeing himself as a person with consistent unchanging values no matter whether he was at church or on-line. I reminded him that **what we are** isn't up to us. God made us and he gets to choose how we must see ourselves: sinner or good person.

So the real question for all of us is "Who are we when we leave church Sinner or Good Person? Everything pivots on this because otherwise there is no reason to use the word "mercy" in our prayers outside church. Are you unsure about about your need to ask God for mercy outside of church? All of us can benefit by asking God to show us why we don't depend on him for his mercy. We all step out from under the umbrella of his mercy at times.

If we bypass the question of Sinner or Good Person very often, then the Good News of our faith doesn't make any sense! Do you know why we call our faith Good News? God calls us sinners and he has chosen to have mercy on us. This is Good News! This is also why we share our faith with the people around us! In the end, God wants to show ALL OF US his mercy because we are all sinners who need his help!

[Possibly published 2022-JANUARY 16 or
FEBRUARY ???]

There is nothing Mysterious about a Mystery of our Faith

*This is the **18th** article in a series called,*
"Why do I pray these prayers at church?"
written by Bill Razgunas.

There is nothing Mysterious about a Mystery of our Faith

The mass lists three choices:

1. We proclaim your Death, O Lord and profess your Resurrection until you come again.
2. When we eat this Bread and drink this Cup, we proclaim your Death, O Lord, until you come again.
3. Save us, Saviour of the world, for by your Cross and Resurrection you have set us free.

Should we be looking for something mysterious in any of these mysteries of faith? Maybe they should be worded more like a mysterious headline:

1. The Death and Resurrection of Jesus remains mysterious until his second coming!
2. Jesus' death is proclaimed by eating the Bread and drinking the Cup! The question is How?
3. **The Savior of the world, reveals our freedom by his Cross and Resurrection! No need to look for anything mysterious!**

Only **Headline 3** retains the true sense of a Divine Mystery. A divine mystery isn't mysterious. A mystery of faith is valid because it is **unknowable without God's revelation**. Much has been revealed through Jesus. We don't need to reword them to make them sound mysterious!

Here is something perplexing and bewildering: we live our daily lives as if a divine mystery is unreal. This happens all the time! Should we live our lives differently given the Mystery that we recite at church? Here is a mystery of faith listed above: "Save us, Saviour of the world, for

by your Cross and Resurrection you have set us free." We don't feel conflicted while we are at church. When we get home, it is a different story. Our prayer might be "Lord, we have real problems at home. Our kids are dabbling with drugs or our son is suffering with a mental illness. God, it's mysterious to me how you are going to save the world and I certainly can't see how you are going to save our family! How do you figure that you have set us free?" Then comes the real tragedy. We abandon our expectation that God will save us and glorify himself in our lives.

The mystery of his work in our families is unknowable apart from God's revelation. We may need to use professionals like a substance abuse counselor or a psychiatrist. The professionals can be helpful in getting us through the crisis we face. However, they can't save us. For this we need God's personal revelation in our lives. I have survived a brain injured family member as well as a painful divorce/ annulment. Mental illness has not been a stranger. Over twenty years ago I was diagnosed with Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD). God's work is still being revealed in my life. Remember that we can live by the principles contained in the divine mysteries listed above! More than merely surviving you and I can expect miracles along the way. There is nothing mysterious about this process! He has walked every step of the way with me. Given your unique problems, he will do the same for you!

[Published 2022-JANUARY 9th]

The Peace of the Lord

*This is the 17th ((NOT 16th)) article in a series called,
"Why do I pray these prayers at church?"
written by Bill Razgunas.*

The Peace of the Lord

"The peace of the Lord be with you." "And with your spirit." (The handshake is left out during COVID 19.) For convenience two people sometimes shorten it to mutually saying "Peace" while shaking hands. Is this some hold-over from a time when two people agreed to suspend hostilities while in church? What is it that we are supposed to get out of doing this? Are we just bestowing our best wishes on the other person? Would we be further ahead if we just left the Lord out of this? Why mention him at all? Shaking hands with a stranger while saying "Peace," is empty of meaning. When in pain, does this gesture reduce the dignity of one's suffering by requiring that I imagine that I am peaceful? Certainly this is not true! So how do suffering and peace mingle side by side?

People who have accepted their suffering are no longer expending their mental energy on feeling that they shouldn't be experiencing it. This is one type of peace in the midst of pain. A deeper level of peace is experienced when people know that it is God's will that they endure patiently while knowing that he is going to bring good out of their pain. Ultimately, it is obedience to God which leads to this experience of peace. Is this the Lord's peace?

The Lord's peace flows from being in a right relationship with the Father. In our lives, sin interrupts this relationship. However, Jesus was sinless. He had true

peace because of his intimacy with God. This would be the end of the story except for what Jesus did for us. Jesus died on the cross so that the sinful chasm between us and God would be healed. This is what salvation is all about. Christ's peace becomes our peace. I believe that this is the peace of the Lord that we wish for each other at the handshake of peace. This is his gift to us. When we are saying "The peace of the Lord be with you." and replying "And with your spirit," it isn't just a wish for something good for the other person! It makes much more sense when we think of it as a prayer that God's full salvation would reach into every nook and cranny of the other person's life.

"The peace of the Lord be with you."

[Possibly published 2021-SEPTEMBER or OCTOBER???

The Collect

*This is the 16th ((NOT 15th) article in a series called,
"Why do I pray these prayers at church?"
written by Bill Razgunas.*

The Collect

Imagine this hypothetical situation: The deacon is standing next to the priest at the chair at the beginning of mass. Suddenly, the deacon is swept up into a holy vision which absorbs all his attention. When the vision ends he finds that he is still at mass. How long was the vision? What is the next part of the mass? What did the deacon miss? He relaxes as he hears the priest pray "Through our Lord Jesus Christ, your Son, who lives and reigns with you in the unity of the Holy Spirit, one God, for ever and ever. Amen." Why did the deacon feel like he could relax in this scenario?

Did you know that the part of the mass that they call the Collect is NOT the part where the ushers collect the contributions of money? When is the Collect prayer and why should we pay attention to it? It is a very short prayer at the beginning of mass. Apart from the content of the prayer, I use it like a game where I test my attention to the priest at the beginning of mass. I recommend this game for anyone who struggles with their attention. I chose the Collect prayer because this is a helpful challenge for me.

Our attentiveness at mass is God's gift to us. At the same time it is our gift to others. Remember that families with little children find attention at mass very difficult. How do I support them? When I choose to be attentive at mass, I also make it easier for the children to hear what is going on because they can listen to my prayers. The Holy Spirit works through prayerful

attentiveness by drawing everyone around us closer to himself. Think of this as a holy contagion. If you want to "infect" others with God's presence, draw near to him yourself.

One of my favorite Collect prayers says: "grant your people to love what you command and to desire what you promise." This is God's plan for us. We don't have a God who loves to make demands while watching us sweat it out. There are times for blood, sweat and tears. However, he lightens our load by giving us love for what he commands and a longing for the promises he gives to us.

So has anyone figured out why the deacon could feel relaxed in the situation proposed above? How much of the mass had he missed? He could relax because the Collect prayer ends in exactly the same way: "Through our Lord Jesus Christ, your Son, who lives and reigns with you in the unity of the Holy Spirit, God, for ever and ever. Amen." The deacon's vision didn't take any time at all! He is standing next to the priest who is saying the Collect.

[Possibly published 2021-SEPTEMBER or
OCTOBER???

Through Him, With Him and In Him (part 2)

*This is the **15th** article in a series called,*
"Why do I pray these prayers at church?"
written by Bill Razgunas.

Through Him, With Him and In Him (part 2)

In part 1, we talked about how the words **through, with and in** communicate our proximity to God and our commitment to follow him where he manifests himself. We aim to live out our lives close to him and we stay close to him by following him when he says "Come!" Our mother the Church identifies this Doxology prayer of glorification as a priestly role at mass. While this exciting prayer belongs to the priest, how come it feels like we are spectators? How come this is just another prayer to get past in order to reach the end of mass? There is the "Amen" that follows. Does this Amen simply indicate that the priest is finally done with his part?

I find it useful to avoid thinking that I am doing something for God. Whenever I am thinking about serving the Lord, I can make the mistake of focusing my inner attention on myself. I must remember that God doesn't need my help. He can raise up any number of servants any time he pleases. As a member of Christ's vine, I can't do anything "for" him. Everything I do is because of him. I am alive **through, with and in** him. I'm never alive "for" him. If I desire to be God's servant, it is because he has enabled my desires **through, with and in** him. He is the vine and I am a branch. As a branch, I have no life in myself. As a branch, I don't even grow "for" him. I always grow because he has enabled it **through, with and in** him.

Do you want to see our church full of vitality on Sunday and as we go about our daily lives? Live your life **through, with and in** him. Ask him to show you any ways where you are in trouble in this area. Do you have trouble with needing to have things your own way? Are you living without him, or existing outside him? He will lead each of us to a place of true freedom. This is the very place where his Holy Spirit is most free to powerfully glorify Jesus! As we live our lives **through, with and in** him, the glory of God will become more evident in our lives. Then we will be prepared to say Amen to God's glorification of himself. Then we will no longer feel like spectators as we hear the priest say: **"Through him, with him and in him, O God almighty Father, in the unity of the Holy Spirit, all glory and honor is yours, for ever and ever."**

[Possibly published 2021-09 - in
SEPTEMBER???

“Through Him, with Him and in Him”

This is the 14th article in a series called,

“Why do I pray these prayers at church?”

written by Bill Razgunas.

“Through Him, with Him and in Him...” This immediately precedes the Our Father. The first question is “Who is this prayer referring to when it says “Him?” If all you do is look at the Doxology, this can be difficult to determine because the Father and the Holy Spirit are both mentioned. Have they left Jesus out of this prayer? What is the priest doing at this point in the mass? Is he looking at anybody? He is holding up the body and blood of Christ. He isn’t looking at anyone! Or, is he? Notice that the priest just said the prayer that changed the bread and wine into the body and blood of Christ. This is Jesus! The person he is holding in his hand is our most favorite person in all the world. All eyes are on Jesus as we say “Through Him, with Him and in Him!” Notice that this prayer finds its full meaning by paying attention to what was just said beforehand by the priest.

Why the laborious combinations of “through”, “with” and “in?” These words communicate our proximity to God and our commitment to follow him where he manifests himself. We aim to live out our lives close to him and we stay close to him by following him when he says “Come!”

This prayer is called a Doxology because it guides our attention toward worshipping God. It mentions that all glory and honor belongs to God. Why do we need so many reminders to worship him? In this world, the greatness of God’s glory is partially hidden. There are times when his glory seems to be completely blocked from view. I believe that this is partially by God’s

design. At the end of time, when God’s glory is fully revealed EVERY knee will bend! Both those who are good and those who are bad must bow to him. During this life we choose which camp we fall into by choosing to worship him of our own free will.

[Possibly published 2021-09- in
SEPTEMBER???

Where does the presence of Jesus go after we swallow the consecrated host during communion?

*This is the 13th article in a series called,
"Why do I pray these prayers at church?"
written by Bill Razgunas.*

Where does the presence of Jesus go after we swallow the consecrated host during communion?

We already talked about the fact that Jesus's presence isn't affected by stomach acid. So where does He go after we swallow the consecrated host? Does Jesus follow the path toward our bowels and subsequently leave our body? The Church teaches that the sacramental presence ceases when the body and blood can no longer be recognized as bread and wine. Does this explain why it is so hard to remember that I just received Jesus in the Eucharist AFTER I have left church. Where does Jesus go? Have you noticed that, while driving the car home from church, it's hard to recall what transpired at mass? These are serious questions.

I believe that Jesus is physically present in the Eucharist. I believe that my behavior needs to reflect this awesome fact while at mass. I genuflect toward the altar when I first enter the church. I bow to Him before I receive the consecrated host. All this amounts to VERY LITTLE if I don't ask God to make my behavior be like Christ outside church. The value of receiving him is limited by my poor participation outside of church. No matter how pure and powerful the manifestation of his presence is during mass. If it only affects my behavior one hour a week, I should expect that my spiritual growth to be likewise stunted. Am I saying that it is all up to me

when I leave church? No! When we leave church, we enter the realm of "actual" graces. God works to provide these graces just because of his love for us! We still have a part to play in choosing to receive what God is giving.

I believe that Christ changes us through each part of the mass. This is true for both being fed from the spoken Word of God as well as the Eucharist. If we hear the Word of God in the readings and let Christ change our behavior outside church then everything is working as it should. Otherwise Christ's message goes in one ear and out the other. What if something similar happens with the Eucharist? Is it possible to consume the consecrated host without becoming more like Jesus? The sad answer is "yes." I bet we all have met individuals who regularly attend daily mass while at the same time they are having significant trouble making their lives outside mass resemble Jesus. In any event, we cooperate with God as he translates the sacramental graces at mass into the "actual" graces in our daily lives. It doesn't happen automatically in anybody's life.

Is this bad news? Whether it is hard or easy, this is the path that we follow to learn to behave like Jesus and to be conduits of his grace to a dying world. It is a lofty call that works itself out in the small things of daily life.

By the way, "actual" grace is that special help which the Holy Spirit gives us to enlighten our minds and to inspire and guide our wills to do good and to avoid evil in particular situations. See https://afc.org/fc_question/what-is-actual-grace/

[Possibly published 2021-08-15]

When does the sacrifice of the Mass end?

*This is the 12th article in a series called,
"Why do I pray these prayers at church?"
written by Bill Razgunas.*

You probably already noticed that I didn't ask "When does the mass end?" That is easy, after the final blessing and at the conclusion of the final hymn. However, what about the end of the "sacrifice of the mass?" What is the sacrifice of the mass? The first real question is "Why should we care?" In a previous part of this series we talked about "Our Sacrifice of the Mass." We saw that it is OUR sacrifice because we offer our obedience in the same way that Jesus does.

What if the sacrifice of the mass doesn't end? Is this good news or not? If I wanted to personally give a bicycle to everyone on the planet, I could only do that as long as I lived. Only God could be everywhere present to make the gift. What if God's gift of a bicycle was so well received that he wanted to make it available to every human that ever lived? God could do this by entering into each person's life at a point where they could understand what God was offering to them. That which started out as an event bound by my human experience of time is now timeless. It happened once while I was alive and now happens at all times as needed for the persons receiving the bicycles. What if the sacrifice of the mass is like this? What if Jesus knew that what he was offering was so good that he wanted to make it available

to everyone no matter when they lived? He would make it available in our present time so that we could receive his gift AND it would be available for all times.

A priest is needed to perform the consecration at mass. In this way that the mass has a beginning and end AND the sacrifice of the mass is eternal. Living the reality of the sacrifice of the mass doesn't replace the role that attending mass provides.

There are many ways to enter into the sacrifice of the mass all week long. When was the last time that you said to your spouse "I am so thankful for the saving power of Christ's blood in my life." Its no surprise that we don't talk about what Christ has done for us with our neighbors. First, we need to begin talking about him to our fellow Catholics throughout our daily lives. Is this one more thing that we need to do? Do we need to add this to the long list of requirements for being a good Catholic? This is a chance to remember what Jesus has done, what he is doing and for what he will do for us. Remember that the triune God is HE that we love the most. He isn't looking for us to approach him out of duty. Approach him out of love and you will find the strength. You don't have to say a prayer out of a prayer book. Just talk to him, thank him and praise him.

By the way, the above bicycle example is a good illustration. However, If you want a fuller understanding of *kairos* look for a good Catholic biblical word study.

[Possibly published 2021-08-08]

The Creed

This is the 11th article in a series called,
"Why do I pray these prayers at church?"
written by Bill Razgunas.

The Creed

It's worthwhile to pay attention to who we are directing our thoughts and prayers to at different points of the mass. Sometimes we are talking to the priest. Sometimes we are praying to the Father. Other prayers have all three of the persons of the trinity mentioned.

So who are we talking to when we say the Creed? It is not formatted as a prayer. In the mass, we have just listened to the word of God proclaimed to us. Up to this time, we have been sharing responses to the priest. It has a very "us" sort of feel about the Mass. Then we encounter the Creed. One cannot help but feel that we have turned a corner. Suddenly, we are talking about ourselves when we say "I." This is the way the Creed is written.

Who is listening to my statement of what I believe? Are we just talking to ourselves? Since we are a community of faith, shouldn't we rewrite the Creed to say "We believe in one God, the Father almighty....?" **Something dramatic happened** right after the Liturgy of the Word and before the Creed. What is this invisible event? Why can't we see it? The reason it is so invisible is because we don't see ourselves as the elect of God. We are uncomfortable with thinking about those in the world as potentially disqualifying themselves from heaven. It isn't our place to judge others. At the same time, there are consequences to refusing the person of Jesus.

So what does this have to do with the Creed? Have you figured out what

happened right before we speak the words? It is at this point that the Catechumens leave the church service to pursue their faith formation. The Catechumens are those who haven't made up their minds as to what they believe. They cannot say the Creed because they don't necessarily believe it.

Who do we say the Creed to? We say it to the Priest. Even more importantly, we say it to each other. Next time you say the Creed say it loud enough so that others around you can hear you. Someday your profession of faith may come back to you at a time when you most need to remember it. Someday it will bear fruit to eternal life. God bless you!

[Was published 2021-08-01]

Our sacrifice of the Mass...

This is the 10th article in a series called,

"Why do I pray these prayers at church?"

written by Bill Razgunas.

Our sacrifice of the Mass

"Pray, brothers and sisters, that my sacrifice and yours may be acceptable to God the almighty Father." Since when did the sacrifice of the Mass become "my sacrifice?" Just because the priest says this prayer doesn't say that I must choose to accept his words blindly.

1.) Is it mine in the same way that the earth is MY planet? It is certainly the planet that I live on. However it is not MINE.

2) Does "my sacrifice" have the same significance as "my parking place?" It is my parking place as long as MY car is parked there. If so, is it only "my sacrifice" as long as I am in the church building?

3.) Is it mine in the same way as it is "my responsibility" to contribute to the support of the parish? Just because someone tells me that I should be generous doesn't make their words MINE!

4.) Is it mine in the same way as my signature is mine? If the Internal Revenue shows me my tax return with my signature and asks "Is this your signature?," there are serious consequences if I choose to say no! Anyone can say that I must be held accountable because the signature is MINE and they would be right. One could argue that the biggest supporting evidence that the Mass is NOT "my sacrifice" is that the Mass will go on whether I am at church or not. If I decided that there would be no mass on a particular Sunday, would anyone pay attention to me? How could it be "my sacrifice?" Also, 99.9% of the people at church wouldn't recognize me on the street. How much less personal can this be? How dare anyone claim that this is "my sacrifice!"

So which type of ownership are we talking about when we say that the sacrifice is MINE?

You may find this hard to believe! The closest answer is actually number **(4) four**. It is most like our signature! How can this be? Nobody in the world was asked whether they wanted God to save them. Like it or not God purchased us from the previous management (the devil). The previous management thought they were getting a good deal when they agreed to surrender possession of all mankind in exchange for the life of God's only Son. The deal was binding even if Jesus came back to

life again. God was able to secure the deal through the one-time sacrificial suffering of his son Jesus. While the suffering was once-for-all-time, Jesus agreed to serve as King and High Priest for ALL time. As High Priest he continues offering the sacrificial gift of his obedience.

This is where we come in. Since Jesus' gift is his obedience and we are destined to become like Jesus, our gift is also obedience to the Father. Welcome to the place where you offer your sacrifice of obedience at the Mass every Sunday. Our sacrifice of obedience will continue whether we attend or not. It will still be OUR sacrifice of the Mass even if we cannot be there. Do you see that it became "our sacrifice" when we accepted the terms of the new management? You and I renew our commitment to the New Covenant every time we choose to renounce the works of the devil. Do you see why I said that the type of identification with MY sacrifice is as personal as each of our signatures? Nobody can offer your sacrifice of obedience FOR you! It is yours to give!

[Was published 2021-07-25]

Here is a common prayer from mass.
Where in the mass does it come from?

This is the 9th article in a series called,

"Why do I pray these prayers at church?"

written by Bill Razgunas.

Here is a common prayer from mass.
Where in the mass does it come from?

First the prayer in Latin: Haec ergo dona, quaesumus, Spiritus tui rore sanctifica, ut nobis Corpus et Sanguis fiant Domini nostri Jesu Christi.

Now I believe I have given it away! What?! You don't understand Latin? Lets try english! What is happening at mass when the following is prayed by the priest?
Where would you find it?

"You are indeed Holy, O Lord, the fount of all holiness. Make holy, therefore, these gifts, we pray, by sending down your Spirit upon them like the dewfall, so that they may become for us the Body and Blood of our Lord Jesus Christ."

Are you having trouble? If you need help see Eucharistic Prayer Number 2.

Are some of you feeling like "Why should I pay this much attention to words that the priest says?" The partial answer is because these are OUR words that the priest is speaking. He is doing this because we asked him to. Remember the priest's request earlier in the mass "Pray, brothers and sisters, that my sacrifice and yours may be acceptable to God the almighty Father." The priest reminds us that he is not alone in praying the Eucharistic prayers. This sacrifice is shared as coming from the priest and us. We give our agreement to this connection when we say "May the Lord accept the sacrifice at your

hands..." The priest offers the sacrifice. The sacrifice is OUR sacrifice.

Looking at this makes me want to repeatedly turn my thoughts back to God during the parts of the mass where the priest is responsible for the dialog. Remembering to do this is what pleases our Lord. Please join me in pleasing the Lord in this way!

OTHER PAST

9) Here is a common prayer "translated" into another language:

"Shoe bar agreed Aly, Ho Lord, the mount of fall alyness. Make aly, threescore, these drifts, we neigh, by screwing drown shore Driblet anon them bike the glueball, sew that they may eardrum for us the Berry and Bud of our Lord Jesus Christ."

You are indeed Holy, O Lord, the fount of all holiness.

Make holy, therefore, these gifts, we pray, by sending down your Spirit upon them like the dewfall, so that they may become for us the Body + and Blood of our Lord, Jesus Christ.

What do you mean you don't understand the meaning? You say its gibberish! What if I told you that you have heard this prayer intoned by the priest thousand of times over the years? You still don't recognize it? Really? Are you still having trouble? Try reading this "translation" aloud. Every word rhymes with the original word as pronounced by the priest at mass.

Here us the same prayer in Latin: Haec ergo dona, quaesumus, Spiritus tui rore sanctifica, ut nobis Corpus et Sanguis fiant Domini nostri Jesu Christi.

Now I believe I have given it away! What?! You don't understand Latin? If you still need help see Eucharistic Prayer Number 2.

What is gained by drawing attention to this prayer? It makes us pay more attention to the words spoken by the priest! **These are OUR words that the priest is speaking because we asked him to.** Do you remember asking him? The priest's request earlier in the mass was "Pray, brothers and sisters, that my sacrifice and yours may be acceptable to God the almighty Father." **In these words, the priest reminds us that he is not alone in praying the Eucharistic prayers.** This sacrifice is shared as coming from the priest and us. We give our agreement to this connection when we say "May the Lord accept the sacrifice at your hands..." The priest offers the sacrifice. The sacrifice is OUR sacrifice.

Let's also sacrifice our drifting attention spans as we repeatedly turn our thoughts back to him remembering that **our full attention** is what pleases him.

[Was published 2021-07-18]

What do the prayers mean at church? At home?

This is the 8th article in a series called,
"Why do I pray these prayers at church?"
written by Bill Razgunas.

What do the prayers mean at church? At home?

The priest says: "We cry out to your majesty on earth and without end we acclaim:

Then we say: "Holy, Holy, Holy Lord God of hosts. Heaven and earth are full of your glory. Hosanna in the highest. Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord. Hosanna in the highest." The priest continues with: "You are indeed Holy, O Lord, the font of all holiness." Is it enough to know that God is holy? We know that we are expected to be holy! Do we have a very picky and demanding God?

This is just the beginning of the questions one can ask about this prayer.

- 1) Pretend you are a student. Suppose your English teacher said: Use the word "hosanna" in a sentence! What sentence would you make up?
- 2) In the prayer at mass we say "hosanna." What is the difference between a hosanna and hosannas?
- 3) Why do we say "Hosanna in the highest?" Do hosannas have different levels?
- 4) We say "Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord." Who is the person that we are saying is blessed? Does the prayer deliberately digress from God's holiness and the delivery of hosannas (at the highest level) to mention this mystery person?

I am concerned about what these things mean to us while at church and when we

leave. If "Hosanna in the highest" only has meaning while we spend time inside the church building, are we sure that we aren't missing something at work and at home? If you have never said "Hosanna" to your Christian roommate, how come? When is it best to say to someone "Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord?"

One reason why you might be having trouble thinking of how to use "hosanna" in an English sentence is because it isn't an English word. The other reason is that the definition, based on modern usage, is HURRAH! These words reflect what we have heard from those spoken aloud during Jesus' triumphant entry into Jerusalem. "HURRAH FOR JESUS!" is a good translation of the modern meaning of this prayer. Our mother, the Church, says that we should use this prayer as translated with the word "hosanna" still used in it. I believe that this answers all the questions I raised. I offer two more questions for your thought. What do you think the people at church are thinking as they say this prayer? Is that the way that you want to sound when you say "HURRAH FOR JESUS"?

If you want to go deeper, look at <https://www.newadvent.org/cathen/07472b.htm>

Hosanna "Praise God!"

Hosanna! - means Jesus, save us, please!

- We choose in the midst of uncertainty to shout, "Hosanna! ..." - We confess our need of You, Jesus! We praise You for paying the penalty for our sins and providing a way for a relationship with God.

Psalms 118:22-29 NIV

22 The stone the builders rejected has become the cornerstone; 23 the Lord has done this, and it is marvelous in our eyes. 24 The Lord has done it this very day; let us rejoice today and be glad. 25 Lord, save us! Lord, grant us success! 26 Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord. From the house of the Lord we

bless you. 27 The Lord is God, and he has made his light
shine on us. With boughs in hand, join in the festal
procession up to the horns of the altar. 28 You are my
God, and I will praise you; you are my God, and I will exalt
you. 29 Give thanks to the Lord, for he is good; his love
endures forever.

[Was published 2021- 07-11]

7) Brothers and Sisters

This is the 7th article in a series called,

"Why do I pray these prayers at church?"

written by Bill Razgunas.

Brothers and Sisters

We generously lather these titles on each other at Mass! What do they mean? Do they only mean something while we are inside the church's four walls? When I leave the church building, the brothers and sisters become 'people.' These people become no different than all the other people in the city where I live. Why do we call these same people "brothers and sisters" at church? Doesn't this just contribute to the feeling that church life and real life are totally divorced from each other? Why do we apply these affectionate terms to people that aren't even our friends?

Liturgically we assign these terms of endearment. Most of the people I see at church are indiscernible from the many people that I pass while doing my grocery shopping. Brothers and Sisters? I may as well just apply these titles to anybody I meet without reference to church. If I do that, I can go about my entire life spreading the "lotion of familiarity" on everybody I meet.

Did you notice the "quality of life" terms I used in the first paragraph? 'Church life' vs 'Real life!' Did that bother you? It bothers me a lot! What is so unreal about church life? What is so irreligious about real life? How do people become my brothers and sisters? I know the theological answer to this question. How do I begin to live the theology in my heart? This works itself out as I consciously remind myself that each

person is more than one of the throng of unnamed people at church! This happens with each person, one at a time. I cooperate with God as he puts flesh and blood on the bones of my theology. God does this with me as I make an effort to remember people's names at church. How will God do this with you? I don't know. Ask him! Say "Lord, please help me to change the way I relate to the strangers at church! Please show me if there are any things I can do to cooperate with you in this area."

[WAS Published 2021-07-04]

What is the strangest prayer in the Mass?

This is the 6th article in a series called,

"Why do I pray these prayers at church?"

written by Bill Razgunas.

What is the strangest prayer in the Mass?

'Strange' is any prayer that I would feel embarrassed to proclaim to someone I just met in a crowded shopping mall. Maybe you cannot see yourself sharing any Catholic prayer OUT LOUD at a crowded shopping mall! What if the prayer itself said that you do this very thing?

"We proclaim your Death, O Lord, and profess your Resurrection, until you come again."

Can I proclaim this quietly in my heart?
After all, it doesn't mention anything about crowded shopping malls! The word 'proclaim' causes me to squirm because it sounds like I should be expressing this without reservation! Is this prayer intended to be hyperbole? The purpose of hyperbole is to create a larger-than-life effect or to overly stress a specific point. I don't think I'm on the right track! It's not hyperbole.

Maybe the prayer's use of the word 'we' isn't meant to be taken literally! After all, who would actually do this? Who are the "we" in this prayer? Could this be translated badly? How about this paraphrased version "*The hierarchy of the church proclaims your Death, O Lord,...?*" Nope, I don't think this paraphrase is going to work.

Look at a printed version of this prayer. Why is the word 'death' capitalized? Doesn't this just make things worse? I love to share my faith with anyone who will

listen. For me, here is a more comfortable revision to this prayer: *We proclaim your Resurrection, until you come in glory!* Did you notice the change? I know in my heart that this 'more comfortable' revision is going in the wrong direction.

What if I need to ask God to change me so that I don't feel like this prayer is strange to proclaim? Don't get me wrong! I feel very comfortable with this prayer AT CHURCH. The idea of changing myself is an uncomfortable idea! What kind of person would I become if I felt free to share this prayer with someone I just met? Even though I'm uncomfortable, I think this is going in the right direction.

[A Parishioner Answers: Yes, my heart would need to become contrite, remorseful, I would be as a repentant sinner praying... "Your Death" is due to "our sin which we proclaim/confess." Yes, "We proclaim/confess our sin/your Death, O Lord, and profess your Resurrection, until you come again." We thank you for your mercy!]

[WAS published 2021-06-13]

"Lamb of God, who takes away the sins of the world, have mercy on us!"

This is the 5th article in a series called,

"Why do I pray these prayers at church?"

written by Bill Razgunas.

"Lamb of God, who takes away the sins of the world, have mercy on us!" Where does this prayer get said? It surprised me to realize that it is said at more than one place in the mass. The most memorable place is right before Communion when the priest says *"Behold the Lamb of God, Behold Him who takes away the sins of the world!"* The entire prayer says *"Lamb of God, who takes away the sins of the world, have mercy on us. Lamb of God, who takes away the sins of the world, have mercy on us. Lamb of God, who takes away the sins of the world, grant us peace."* Does this count as being said twice in the mass? This prayer actually occurs in two DIFFERENT places in the mass. Where is the other place?

In order to locate the other place, look into your heart and ask "What do these words mean to me? What emotions do these words stir up in my heart?" Inside me these words conjure up the prayer *"Lord, I am not worthy that you should enter under my roof, but only say the word and my soul shall be healed."* However this is no help because that is also right before Communion. That is not the answer. Are there any other emotions that this prayer captures? The other emotions, in my heart, include feelings of intense gratitude because I know that the answer to this prayer is "Yes, I do have mercy on you." Where would you find expressions of intense gratitude? I'll leave that for you to figure out.

[If needed, here's a hint, "... receive our prayer; you are seated at the right hand of the Father, have mercy on us."]

[If needed, here's a hint, "... receive our prayer; you are seated at the right hand of the Father, have mercy on us."]

I find expressions of intense gratitude at Mass in the **Gloria**.

"Lord Jesus Christ, Only Begotten Son, Lord God, Lamb of God, Son of the Father, you take away the sins of the world, have mercy on us; you take away the sins of the world, receive our prayer; you are seated at the right hand of the Father, have mercy on us."

[WAS published 2021- 06-06]

**The Mass is
THE PRAYER OF THE CHURCH**

This is the 4th article in a series called,

"Why do I pray these prayers at church?"

written by Bill Razgunas.

The Mass is THE PRAYER OF THE CHURCH. Some of you will be saying "This guy is just going to "gush" on about how great the Mass is! How much of this can anyone tolerate!" This deserves some clarification. Roman Catholics that "gush" all over the greatness of the Mass are often guilty of expanding on the greatness of the Mass because it is THE MASS. I don't believe that the Mass is great because of the prayers that it contains. It is great because of the person that it directs our attention to! It is in our ATTENTION TO HIM that we enter into the greatness that the Mass contains.

I believe that we can live in Christ's presence throughout our whole week. Just because we aren't in the actual presence of Jesus, in the Eucharist, all week long doesn't mean that he leaves our hearts. How many of us feel Jesus has stayed with us only as long as the consecrated host is still in our digestive system? Does God's gift of life get affected by stomach acid? We also surround Christ's saving work in our lives with liturgical language and leave it at church because nobody talks like that IN PUBLIC. The liturgy is a wonderful gift! Nonetheless, learn to talk about Christ's saving work in your life, using your own words, outside the physical church building. We also expect God's greatness because we pray prayers of faith at church as part of the mass. Then we leave church with great expectation that we will return again in a week. Why do we wait for a whole week? Is there any wonder why so many Catholics are leaving the Church because they see more vitality elsewhere?

Do my words speak to you? Ask for Christ's help in changing! When the priest or deacon says "Go" at the end of mass, we can change the way we hear this word! We can beg Jesus to make our lives, outside of church, reflect the eternal weight of glory that already awaits us! What will happen then? We will live lives of virtue and piety that non-Christians will admire and wish for themselves. We will see miracles happen in the lives of those around us because the power of the living God lives within us! We will proclaim God's greatness in word and deed.

[WAS published 2021-05-23]

The Lord be with you...

This is the 3rd article in a series called,

"Why do I pray these prayers at church?"

written by Bill Razgunas.

One of my favorite prayers at church is where the priest says: "The Lord be with you." Then we say: "And with your spirit." We say this four times every mass. What could be so important that we would want to repeat it four times? One answer is that where the Lord is present, the irresistible and the unstoppable meet! We don't have to ask if something good will happen when we find ourselves in God's presence. We know that he is good and that he will bring about his heart's desire wherever he is.

I have experienced being in God's presence when he told me that something bad was going to happen. After this one of the worst things that have happened in my entire life occurred soon thereafter. Wasn't I in God's presence? Where was the good? I learned that God shows his goodness where the need is greatest. Where the need is desperately great, his response will be proportionally large. Just because something terrible was about to happen, didn't negate the goodness of his presence. The goodness of his presence could be understood because of the overwhelming need for it.

When the priest says "The Lord be with you." and we say "And with your spirit," something good is about to happen. The irresistible and unstoppable are about to happen! A reasonable question would be "What are you talking about? These are just the words that we say at that point in the Mass!" If the Mass is just a form of religious entertainment, then I would agree. On the other hand, what if the Mass was in fact about something that was so astoundingly large that every prayer could conceivably pack a lifetime of meaning? This question should make us feel uncomfortable!! Haven't we all devalued the work of God in our lives at times. It should make us tremble as we think about the enormity of God's work in each of us! Tremble before God as we invite his presence into our lives. Then with our whole heart answer the priest's call "The Lord be with you." saying **"And with your spirit!."**

[WAS published 2021-05-16]

May the Almighty God bless you...

This is the 2nd article in a series called,

"Why do I pray these prayers at church?"

written by Bill Razgunas.

May the Almighty God bless you...

What would be the best news that you could get right before the end of Mass? It ISN'T that Mass is almost over! It's that God's blessing is pronounced over you! If God REALLY blessed people, how come people aren't lining up to get this blessing? How come people aren't mobbing the Church services just to be there for the final blessing?

Even though God's blessing gives another push in favor of God's redemption in our lives, we still have a large part in saying how effective it is! God's blessing is always linked to our behavior. Is this because God is like a miser and wants to withhold his blessing unless you do what he wants? OR Is it because doing what he wants is inseparable from being blessed? His blessing isn't like a little bottle of distilled LUCK that brings unbelievable good fortune to the user for a period of time. Where we have bonded our hearts to him, his blessing comes with unforgettably good news. We shall have our heart's desire! This is true not only for this life but for all eternity!

[WAS published 2021-05-09]

Thanks be to God!

This is the 1st article in a series called,

"Why do I pray these prayers at church?"

written by Bill Razgunas

Thanks be to God!

Who gets to say the final word in the Mass? Is it the priest or is it you? The last words in every Mass are "Thanks be to God!" What are we thanking God for? I think we all agree that we are about to begin the rest of our lives! Are we thanking God that the Mass is over AT LAST and now we can get on with our lives? Either the priest or deacon has said the important word "Go!" What is so exciting about leaving church that we should be thanking God?

This next statement should be a little astounding: We are thanking God that what faces us is truly exciting! We get to go and tell everyone what Christ has done for them! To many Catholics this is not Good News! Something has been lost! What has Jesus Christ done for you that would be so worthwhile to tell all your friends? How do I get in touch with this missing dimension in my life? Ask these questions until you find out answers that make sense to you!

It's fitting that the last words of every Mass be spoken by the people. If you were in an argument with someone, chances are that you will remember the last thing YOU said. If you try to retell what the other person's last words were, it will be much harder to recall. The Catholic Church has given you the final word at Mass. Make the most of it!

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This Is A Series of Forum Articles Called,
"Why do I pray these prayers at church?"
written by Bill Razgunas.
