

My Dear Friends in Christ,

May the Lord pour forth upon you all His abundant Graces and Blessings this Christmas Season as we gather devoutly to celebrate the Incarnation of His Divine Son, Our Savior, Jesus Christ! The latter portion of 2018 has been a tragic and tumultuous time in the history of The Church on earth. Never did I expect to witness the uncovering of such disordered, foul and sinful actions on the parts of my fellow churchmen. While we have all been reeling with a plethora of thoughts and emotions such as disbelief, anger, bitterness and profound sadness, we must keep as a constant reminder for hope, the words of Our Lord to Saint Peter: *Thou art Peter; and upon this rock I will build my church, and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it.*¹ These words will remain true until the end of days. Therefore, though the Church be rocked by scandal, division and woe, She will prevail until the Coming of the Lord.

While many have proposed potential sources or causes for these tragic and colossal failure, the true source is really quite easy to pinpoint: *Sin. Sin is an offense against reason, truth, and right conscience; it is failure in genuine love for God and neighbor caused by a perverse attachment to certain good*² or a perceived good. Thus the question remains: what can each of us do to help the Church heal these wounds among her members and heal as the Body of Christ? The cure is frankly as basic as the sickness: turn from sin and grow in genuine love for God. Just as we have seen that the sinful actions of individual members of the Church harm the entire Church, so too when one individual member grows in genuine holiness and love for God, the entire Church benefits.

Each of us must discern where God is calling us to grow during this Christmastide and beyond. As your pastor, I am committed to assisting everyone in that endeavor, as well as continuing and increasing my personal efforts at becoming and being the good and holy priest Christ expects me to be. Part of my job as your pastor is continue my efforts to open for you more opportunities to enter even deeper into the mysteries and wonders of our faith through prayer and the Sacraments, especially through the celebration of the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass.

While we have done a great deal already to incorporate more beauty and dignity into our celebrations of the Sacraments here at St. Mary's, the Lord has placed upon my heart a desire and urge to do more and continue building on the strong foundation we have. During my relatively short time as an ordained priest, I have been approached by various individuals who have expressed a desire to attend a Mass celebrated according to the liturgical books promulgated by Saint John XXIII in 1962. These individuals have been of a variety of ages and backgrounds, some longing for the ceremonies they remembered from their youth, others currently in their youth who are curious about and hungry for a glimpse of the items kept within the treasury of the Church's Tradition. In the last decade of my life, I have personally become interested and steeped with curiosity about the history of the liturgy of the Church, especially the Mass. The requests from these faithful and devout people, in addition to my own thirst for knowledge, inspired me to recently attend a workshop in Chicago hosted by the Canons Regular of Saint John Cantius. This clerical institute of apostolic religious life focuses on living out their charism, which is *to help Catholics rediscover a profound sense of the sacred through solemn liturgies, devotions, sacred art, sacred music, as well as instruction in Church heritage, catechetics, and Catholic culture.*³ The Canons celebrate both forms of the Latin Rite: The Ordinary Form (*Novus Ordo* or *Mass of Paul VI*) and the Extraordinary Form (*Tridentine Mass* or *Traditional Latin Mass*). As I am comfortable and well-versed in the celebration of the Ordinary Form of the Mass, I attended this workshop, which focused on learning the celebration of the Extraordinary Form of the Mass, in order to broaden my knowledge of our entire Tradition and thus benefit my ministry to all of you. As our Lord tells us in the Gospel of Matthew: *Every scribe instructed in the kingdom of heaven, is like to a man that is a householder, who bringeth forth out of his treasure new things and old.*⁴

While in Chicago, immersed everyday in 6 hours of liturgical study and practice, I fell in love with the beauty, mystery and imagery of the Extraordinary Form of the Mass, even though I was studying and learning the simplest form, the Low Mass. Nevertheless, the realization that I was practicing and carrying out the same actions, prayers and rites that had been used by centuries of faithful Catholics was overwhelming. As I pondered these realities I recalled how so many great Saints of the Church, both canonized and many more unknown, had been spiritually fed by these beautiful and solemn rites, which assisted them in living exemplary lives of virtue and holiness. Thus I realized that this is not something we can or should ignore. We must be aware of and immersed in our Catholic heritage and traditions. The Fathers of the Second Vatican Council wrote: *in faithful obedience to tradition, the sacred Council declares that holy Mother Church holds all lawfully acknowledged rites to be of equal right and dignity; that she wishes to preserve them in the future and to foster them in every way.*⁵ With the promulgation of the Motu

Proprio *Summorum Pontificum*, Pope Emeritus Benedict XVI, opened the door for which we can more universally enter into the experience of these ancient rites, building upon the framework of St. John Paul II's wise and gracious decisions to permit the continuance of this form of the Roman Rite. Therefore, beginning in the month of February, we will be providing (on a trial basis) the monthly opportunity for those individuals who are desirous of it, to attend a Mass celebrated in the Extraordinary Form of the Roman Rite. These Masses will be celebrated on Saturday mornings during our regular 8:00 AM Mass time on the second Saturday of the month. As noted by Pope Emeritus Benedict XVI, *The Roman Missal promulgated by Pope Paul VI is the ordinary expression of the 'lex orandi' (rule of prayer) of the Catholic Church of the Latin rite. The Roman Missal promulgated by Saint Pius V and revised by Blessed John XXIII is nonetheless to be considered an extraordinary expression of the same 'lex orandi' of the Church and duly honored for its venerable and ancient usage. These two expressions of the Church's 'lex orandi' will in no way lead to a division in the Church's 'lex credendi' (rule of faith); for they are two usages of the one Roman rite.*⁶ It follows that, the introduction of these celebrations into the liturgical life of the parish, is not to be seen as something that divides us, but rather enriches us and helps us grow as well formed and well informed Catholics.

On a very practical note, for those of you who are interested in attending these Masses but may be nervous due to your unfamiliarity with the rites and/or the Latin language, resources will be provided to assist all of those present to enter fully into the prayer and celebration of the Holy Sacrifice. Some instruction will also be presented to further promote understanding. This will certainly involve a rather steep learning curve for all of us, nevertheless, the efforts we put in, in cooperation with the assistance of the Holy Spirit, I'm sure will bear abundant fruit for the spiritual life of us all.

As we begin this new year of grace together, may we all open our hearts to the promptings of the Holy Spirit and the call and command of Christ to continue our journey toward holiness and deeper union with Him, until we reach that Kingdom where we long to be. Be assured my prayers and love to you all during this most blessed of seasons! Merry Christmas!

In Paternal Love,

Fr. Bill Meininger, Pastor
Saint Mary's of the Lake, Culver

25 December A.D. 2018

*We have spoken frankly to you, Corinthians; our heart is open wide.
You are not constrained by us; you are constrained by your own affections.
As recompense in kind (I speak as to my children), be open yourselves.*

2 Corinthians 6:11-13

¹ Matthew 16:18

² *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, §1849

³ <https://www.canons-regular.org/about-us/charism>

⁴ Matthew 13:52

⁵ *Sacrosanctum Concilium*, §4

⁶ *Summorum Pontificum*, Art. 1