

THE EUCHARIST

1. THE MOUNTAINTOP

Father Olson mentioned that, in Biblical times - both for the Old Testament Hebrews and Jesus Himself - the practice of 'going up to the mountaintop' to speak with God was the custom. Today, this practice is continued in the construction of Catholic churches.

- » At SMM, this is especially evident, as the Altar is the highest point in the entire church (with the exception of the choir loft, whose primary purpose is to 'elevate' our worship).

2. THE EUCHARISTIC REVIVAL + CONGRESS

The Dioceses (local churches) of the United States are currently in the process of a "Eucharistic Revival", which aims to educate the Faithful and the world about the beauty and importance of Christ in the Blessed Sacrament. You can learn more about this process at www.eucharisticrevival.org.

- » The Eucharistic Revival will culminate in Indianapolis next Summer with the an historic National Eucharistic Congress, the first of its kind in our country for over 80 years. You can read more about the Congress at www.eucharisticcongress.org

3. JOHN'S GOSPEL

The Apostle John, as Father Olson pointed out, was the last-authored of the four (the others being Matthew, Mark, and Luke). Many historians and scripture experts believe that his intention when writing the book was the complement the others', especially Luke's, by emphasizing certain moments in Christ's earthly ministry that were being neglected or abused by various factions, both within the Church and outside of it. Father Olson mentioned this with the 'Bread of Life' discourse given in chapter 6.

- » We can see, for example, from Paul's earlier letters - especially his first to the Corinthians - that the Eucharistic ritual was already a central part of the life of the true Christians.
- » The closing verses of the second chapter of the Acts of the Apostles also hints at this.
- » It is in precisely this context that the modern ministry of today's bishops is understood; they are the chief shepherds, who, in the name and person of Christ, "call us back" to the Truth, as once John sought to do by his Gospel (and Peter and Paul with their letters, etc.)

4. APOSTOLIC AUTHORITY

The fact that John's Gospel has this intention also highlights that, from the very beginning, the authority of Christ's apostles was understood to be supreme. This was not only because of their lived experience with Christ, but because of the unique office/role that He bestowed upon them. For example, there were surely plenty of witnesses to the life and ministry of Christ, yet the only accounts that were deemed fit for inclusion in the Scriptures were those that were connected to the Apostles.

- » The Council of Jerusalem, which is described in chapter 15 of the Acts of the Apostles, also illustrates this. It was to the Apostles that questions about the identity, purpose, mission, and practice of the Church were referred - and their decisions were held as binding by all those who were disciples of Jesus.

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5. THE PASSEOVER

Father noted that the celebration of Mass is based upon Jewish rituals, as well as Jesus' own ministry. It is for this reason that the Mass has a fixed 'order' - that is, it is a strictly-governed affair, with directives given for every part of it. This is also why the Mass is structured in the **particular way** that it is - every single act/motion and word has some basis in the history of God's people, from the time of Abraham through to the time of Christ.

6. BREAKING OF BREAD IMAGERY

The verbiage employed in the prayers at Mass is drawn from several different "breaking of bread" moments in the Bible... not just the Last Supper, but also the Feeding of the Five Thousand, Paul's letters, the Bread of Life Discourse, etc. **Why?** It emphasizes the place of the Eucharist in the context of Christian life and Salvation History. *The Eucharisti is not merely a nice ceremony left by Christ; its institution was the climax of His entire ministry, which itself was the climax of thousands of years of God's relationship with His people.*

- » This is different from many other Christian traditions, where the today's celebration of the Lord's Supper is simply the recitation of some Gospel account of the Last Supper.
- » The Catholic 'way of doing things' is meant to establish that the Eucharist is the way Christ bestows the life which He came to bring to a people who were dead in sin.

7. DIVISIONS IN THE CHRISTIAN COMMUNITY

The admonition against dis-unity from Paul in his letter to the Corinthians is, in some respects, certainly relevant to our parish in particular. With so many different ethnic groups/communities - which, specifically, present language barriers - we must remain intentionally united in a way that not every parish community faces.

- » The Parish staff, for example, always refers to the Masses as the "12pm Mass", the "10am Mass", etc. - because, even though the languages of the celebration vary, its celebration is not limited to only those who form that language group, but are open to all
- » Throughout the year - Corpus Christi and Holy Week are two major examples - we have opportunities for intentional unity in our worship. In our community life, the Bite of SMM is a highlight of our efforts to truly live up to our parish's mission statement: "One community, united in our Catholic liturgy, mission, and faith"

8. THE MEMORIAL OF CHRIST

As Father Olson mentioned, the Mass is the "memorial of Christ". *This is not a re-enactment*, but a living encounter with the Paschal Mystery (i.e., the ministry, passion, death, resurrection, and ascension of Christ).

- » When we "remember" a memory, we, in a sense, enter into it the events that took place - even this does not compare to the reality of what takes place during Mass.
- » I once heard a priest describe it as akin to a going to see a Civil War re-enactment in Gettysburg -- except that, instead of actors portraying the events, the event was actually taking place.

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9. THE EUCHARISTIC SPECIES

In receiving Communion either in the Host or from the Chalice, we truly receive the totality of Christ: His Body, Blood, Soul, and Divinity. Today, the Church promotes distributing Communion under both kinds as a means of drawing out imagery not of the Last Supper, but the reality of the Sacrament: it is both essential (bread image) and sweet (wine image) for our spiritual lives.

- » This, for example, is why Communion is not distributed from the Chalice here at SMM during weekday Masses, but is reserved for Sundays and Holydays of Obligation.
- » Only the celebrating Priest must consume both the Host and from the Chalice.