

September 10, 2023 – POPE FRANCIS ON EUCHARIST

Pope Francis said that Catholics must place the Eucharist at the center of their lives to transform their relationships with God and their neighbors. He pointed out: “If you are the same at the end of Mass as you were at the beginning, something is wrong. The Eucharist is the presence of Jesus, it is deeply transforming. Jesus comes and must transform you. By offering Himself in the Eucharist, Christ invites us so that our lives may be nourished by Him and may nourish the lives of our brothers and sisters.” The Pope continued that the Eucharistic celebration is an encounter with the Risen Jesus. At the same time, it is a way of opening ourselves to the world as He taught us. Each time Catholics participate in the Eucharist, Jesus comes and gives us the strength to love like He loved because the Eucharist gives us the courage to encounter others, to go out of ourselves and to open ourselves to others with love. The Pope stressed that the Eucharist is God’s response to the deepest hunger of the human heart, the hunger for authentic life, for, in the Eucharist, Christ Himself is truly in our midst, to nourish, console and sustain us on our journey. The bishop lamented that unfortunately, today many Catholics believe that the Eucharist is more a symbol than the reality of the Lord’s presence and love. He emphasized that the Eucharist is more than a symbol; it is the real and loving presence of the Lord. He is praying that Catholics may place at the center of their lives the Eucharistic celebration which transforms human relationships and opens up an encounter with God and their brothers and sisters.

September 3, 2023 - POPE FRANCIS ON EUCHARIST

Pope Francis said that we are a community nourished by the body and blood of Christ. Communion with the body of Christ is an effective sign of unity, of communion, of sharing. One cannot participate in the Eucharist without committing oneself to mutual fraternity, which is sincere. But the Lord knows well that our human strength alone is not enough for this. On the contrary, He knows that among His disciples there will always be the temptation of rivalry, envy, prejudice, division, misunderstanding, pride, individualism and self glorification. We are all aware of these things. For this reason, He left us the Sacrament of His real, tangible and permanent Presence, so that, in remaining united to Him, we may always receive the gift of fraternal love. “Abide in my love” (Jn 15:9), Jesus said; and this is possible thanks to the Eucharist. To abide in friendship, in love.

August 27, 2023 - POPE FRANCIS ON EUCHARIST

Pope Francis said that the Eucharist communicates the Lord’s love for us: a love so great that it nourishes us with Himself; a freely given love, always available to every person who hungers and needs to regenerate his own strength. To live the experience of faith means to allow oneself to be nourished by the Lord and to build one’s own existence not with material goods but with the reality that does not perish: the gifts of God, his Word and his Body. We don’t ever thank the Lord enough for the gift he has given us in the Eucharist! It is a very great gift and that is why it is so important to go to Mass on Sunday. Go to Mass not just to pray, but to receive Communion, the bread that is the Body of Jesus Christ who saves us, forgives us, unites us to the Father. It is a beautiful thing to do! And we go to Mass every Sunday because that is the day of the resurrection of the Lord. That is why Sunday is so important to us. And in this Eucharist we feel this belonging to the Church, to the People of God, to the Body of God,

to Jesus Christ. We will never completely grasp the value and the richness of it. Let us ask him then that this Sacrament continue to keep his presence alive in the Church and to shape our community in charity and communion, according to the Father's heart.

August 20, 2023 – Pope Francis: The Eucharist gives us Christ's healing love

Pope Francis said that only love can heal fear at its root and free us from the self-centeredness that imprisons us. And that is what Jesus does. He comes as Bread broken in order to break open the shells of our selfishness. He gives of himself in order to teach us that only by opening our hearts can we be set free from our interior barriers, from the paralysis of the heart. Many people have been hurt by lack of affection and bitter disappointments caused by those who should have given them love and instead orphaned their hearts. We would like to go back and change the past, but we cannot. God, however, can heal these wounds by placing within our memory a greater love: His own love. The Lord knows that evil and sins do not define us; they are diseases, infections. And He comes to heal them with the Eucharist, which contains the antibodies to our negative memory. We will always remember our failures, troubles, problems at home and at work, our unrealized dreams. But their weight will not crush us because Jesus is present even more deeply, encouraging us with His love. God gave the world the gift of the Eucharist because He knows how easily people can forget Him in their weakness, the pope said. God knows how difficult it is, He knows how weak our memory is. He did not just leave us words, for it is easy to forget what we hear. He did not just leave us the Scriptures, for it is easy to forget what we read. He did not just leave us signs, for we can forget even what we see. He gave us Food, for it is not easy to forget something we have actually tasted. He left us Bread in which He is truly present, alive and true, with all the flavor of His love.

August 13, 2023 – Pope Francis: The Eucharist gives us Christ's healing love

Pope Francis said that Christ's presence in the Eucharist heals wounds and transforms bitter negativity into the joy of the Lord. The Eucharist brings us the Father's faithful love, which heals our sense of being orphans. It gives us Jesus' love, which transformed a tomb from an end to a beginning, and in the same way can transform our lives. It fills our hearts with the consoling love of the Holy Spirit, who never leaves us alone and always heals our wounds. Every time we receive Jesus, we are reminded that we are precious, that we are guests He has invited to His banquet, friends with whom He wants to dine. And not only because He is generous, but because He is truly in love with us. He sees and loves the beauty and goodness that we are. The Eucharist is not simply an act of remembrance; it is a fact: the Lord's Passover is made present once again for us. In Mass the death and resurrection of Jesus are set before us. The Lord, offering himself to us in the simplicity of bread, also invites us not to waste our lives in chasing the myriad illusions that we think we cannot do without, yet that leave us empty within. The Eucharist satisfies our hunger for material things and kindles our desire to serve. It raises us from our comfortable and lazy lifestyle and reminds us that we are not only mouths to be fed, but also His hands, to be used to help feed others

August 6, 2023 - Pope Francis' Catechesis on Mass:

HOW CAN WE RESPOND to those who say that it is of no use going to Mass, even on Sunday, because the important thing is to live well, to love our neighbor? 1) It is true that the quality of Christian life is measured by the capacity to love, as Jesus said: "By this, all men will know that you are my disciples, if you have love for one another" (Jn 13:35); BUT HOW CAN WE PRACTICE THE GOSPEL WITHOUT DRAWING THE ENERGY NECESSARY TO DO SO, one Sunday after another, FROM THE NEXHAUSTIBLE SOURCE OF THE EUCHARIST? 2) We do not go to Mass in order to give something to God BUT TO RECEIVE WHAT WE TRULY NEED FROM HIM. We are reminded of this by the Church's prayer, which is addressed to God in this way: "Although you have no need of our praise, yet our thanksgiving is itself your gift, since our praises add nothing to your greatness but profit us for salvation" (Roman Missal, Common Preface iv). 3) (In conclusion,) why do we go to Mass on Sundays? It is not enough to respond that it is a precept of the Church; this helps to preserve its value but alone does not suffice. We, Christians, need to participate in Sunday Mass because ONLY WITH JESUS' GRACE, with his living presence within us and among us, CAN WE PUT HIS COMMANDMENT INTO PRACTICE, and thus be his CREDIBLE WITNESSES.

June 25, 2023 – EUCHARISTIC QUOTES FROM SEVERAL SAINTS "GOD'S LOVING GAZE

At the sight of the crowds, Jesus' heart was moved with pity for them... (Matthew 9:36) Jesus is the perfect icon of God's extravagant love. He is the image par excellence of the Invisible God. His heart was moved with pity because He is the Good Shepherd. He reveals God's loving gaze to us. When God sees us, He sees our pain, suffering and misery. That is the heartfelt compassion of Jesus. He is not an audience, spectator, indifferent. He involves, engages and enters into our human experience. He reveals the heart of Yahweh, the God of Israel. When God revealed himself to Moses at the burning bush, He said, "I heard the cry of my people. I saw their suffering. Whom shall I send?" (Exodus 3:7) Jesus' heart was moved with pity because only God satisfies us. He is the longing, yearning and desire of the people of Israel. Our hearts are made for God alone and our hearts are restless until they find rest in God (St. Augustine). Most of the time we look for happiness and satisfaction in the wrong places. We are made for God alone that is why we are never satisfied with the things of this world because we are meant for eternity. We are meant to live with God forever. Jesus' heart was moved with pity because that is the immensity of God's compassion. He is our loving and merciful Father. He wants to fill us with His love and sends us for the transformation of the world. He calls us to be shepherds to the needy. He gave the disciples the authority over unclean spirits because Jesus is a warrior. The disciples of Jesus are also warriors. Life is a battle against forces of darkness visible and invisible. We fight against evil not on its own terms but on God's terms. If we fight evil on its terms we will never win. The healings of Jesus reveals that the reign of Satan is ended. The kingdom of wholeness has come. That is why we need the power of God that is His divine love, the Holy Spirit who is the love that connects the Father and the Son. God's love is the authentic power, the only and real power. Love alone is eternal. So we fight evil by being rooted in God's love. Jesus' heart is moved with pity today because many are still lost, hungry and thirsty of God's love. Are we willing to be agents of God's love? Then we are called to encounter and experience His love by submitting ourselves

totally to the Way of Christ, making His choices, vision and values our own for the transformation of the world.

June 18, 2023 - EUCHARISTIC QUOTES FROM SEVERAL SAINTS

“Ask Jesus to make you a saint. After all, only He can do that. Go to confession regularly and to communion as often as you can.” Saint Dominic Savio “Our Lord in the Blessed Sacrament has His hands full of graces, and He is ready to bestow them on anyone who asks for them.” St. Peter of Alcantara “Father, I am hungry; for the love of God give this soul her food, her Lord in the Eucharist.” St. Catherine of Siena “O Sisters, if we would only comprehend the fact that while the Eucharistic Species remain within us, Jesus is there and working in us inseparably with the Father and the Holy Spirit and therefore the whole Holy Trinity is there...” St. Mary Magdalene di Pazzi “The minutes that follow Communion are the most precious we have in our lives. They are the minutes best suited on our part for treating with God, and on His part for communicating His Love to us.” St. Mary Magdalene di Pazzi

June 11, 2023 – EUCHARISTIC QUOTES FROM SEVERAL SAINTS

“Ask Jesus to make you a saint. After all, only He can do that. Go to confession regularly and to communion as often as you can.” Saint Dominic Savio “Our Lord in the Blessed Sacrament has His hands full of graces, and He is ready to bestow them on anyone who asks for them.” St. Peter of Alcantara “Father, I am hungry; for the love of God give this soul her food, her Lord in the Eucharist.” St. Catherine of Siena “O Sisters, if we would only comprehend the fact that while the Eucharistic Species remain within us, Jesus is there and working in us inseparably with the Father and the Holy Spirit and therefore the whole Holy Trinity is there...” St. Mary Magdalene di Pazzi “The minutes that follow Communion are the most precious we have in our lives. They are the minutes best suited on our part for treating with God, and on His part for communicating His Love to us.” St. Mary Magdalene di Pazzi

June 4, 2023 – PRAYER TO THE MOST HOLY TRINITY O my Love, my only Good, Most Holy Trinity, I adore You, hidden in the depths of my soul. To You, to Your honor and glory, I dedicate my life. May every thought, word and deed of mine be an act of adoration and praise directed towards Your Divine Majesty enthroned in my heart. O Father, Infinite Goodness, behold Your child, clothed in the likeness of Your Son. Extend to me Your arms that I may belong to You forever. O Son, Divine Lord, made man, crucify me with Yourself that I may become, in union with You, a sacrifice of praise for the glory of Your Father. O Holy Spirit, Fire of Everlasting Love, consume me on the altar of Divine Charity, that at the end of life, nothing may remain but that which bears the likeness of Christ. O Blessed Trinity, worthy of all adoration, I wish to remain in spirit on my knees, to acknowledge forever Your reign in me and over me, to Your everlasting glory. Through the Immaculate Heart of Mary and the pure heart of St. Joseph, I consecrate my life to Your adoration and glory. At the moment of death, receive me, O my Triune Love, that I may continue my adoration of love through all eternity. Amen.

May 28, 2023 – EUCHARISTIC QUOTES FROM SEVERAL SAINTS

“When you have received Him, stir up your heart to do Him homage; speak to Him about your spiritual life, gazing upon Him in your soul where He is present for your happiness; welcome Him as warmly as possible, and behave outwardly in such a way that your actions may give proof to all of His Presence.” St. Francis De Sales “Holy Communion being the daily bread of a priest, I feel myself happy, well pleased, and resigned in the rather exceptional circumstances in which it has pleased Divine Providence to put me.” Saint Damien of Molokai “The Eucharist is the bread that gives strength. It is at once the most eloquent proof of His love and the most powerful means of fostering His love in us. He gives Himself every day so that our hearts as burning coals may set afire the hearts of the faithful.” St. Damien of Molokai “If we but paused for a moment to consider attentively what takes place in this Sacrament, I am sure that the thought of Christ's love for us would transform the coldness of our hearts into a fire of love and gratitude.” St. Angela of Foligno “The Holy Sacrifice is something so great that it would require three eternities to offer it up fittingly; the first to prepare for it, the second to celebrate it, and the third to return thanks.” St. John Eudes

May 21, 2023 – EUCHARISTIC QUOTES FROM ST. CYPRIAN OF CARTHAGE

“When the Lord, in speaking of bread which is produced by the compacting of many grains of wheat, refers to it as His Body, He is describing our people whose unity He has sustained, and when He refers to wine pressed from many grapes and berries, as His Blood, He is speaking of our flock, formed by the fusing of many united together.” “If Christ Jesus, our Lord and God, is himself the high priest of God the Father; and if he offered himself as a sacrifice to the Father; and if he commanded that this be done in commemoration of himself, then certainly the priest, who imitates that which Christ did, truly functions in place of Christ, and offers there in the Church a true and perfect sacrifice to God the Father.” “But when the water is mingled in the cup with wine, the people are made one with Christ, and the assembly of believers is associated and conjoined with Him on whom it believes; which association and conjunction of water and wine is so mingled in the Lord's cup, that that mixture cannot any more be separated.”

May 14, 2023 – EUCHARISTIC QUOTES FROM ST. JOHN CHRYSOSTOM

“How many of you say: I should like to see His face, His garments, His shoes. You do see Him, you touch Him, you eat Him. He gives Himself to you, not only that you may see Him, but also to be your food and nourishment.” “For what is the bread? The Body of Christ. And what do they become who partake of it? The Body of Christ: not many bodies, but one body. For as the bread consisting of many grains is made one, so that the grains nowhere appear; they exist indeed, but their difference is not seen by reason of their conjunction; so are we conjoined both with each other and with Christ.” “It is not man that causes the things offered to become the Body and Blood of Christ, but he who was crucified for us, Christ himself. The priest, in the role of Christ, pronounces these words, but their power and grace are God's. This is my body, he says. This word transforms the things offered.” “We always offer the same Lamb, not one today and another tomorrow, but always the same one. For this reason, the sacrifice is always only one... Even now we offer that victim who was once offered and who will never be consumed.” “What good is it if the Eucharistic table is overloaded with golden chalices when your brother is dying of hunger? Start by satisfying his hunger and then with what is left you

may adorn the altar as well.” “At such time the angels surround the priest. The whole sanctuary and the space before the altar is filled with the heavenly Powers come to honor Him who is present upon the altar.”

May 7, 2023 - EUCHARISTIC QUOTES FROM ST. THOMAS AQUINAS “The Sacrament of the Body of the Lord puts the demons to flight, defends us against the incentives to vice and to concupiscence, cleanses the soul from sin, quiets the anger of God, enlightens the understanding to know God, inflames the will and the affections with the love of God, fills the memory with spiritual sweetness, confirms the entire man in good, frees us from eternal death, multiplies the merits of a good life, leads us to our everlasting home, and re-animates the body to eternal life.” “Material food first changes into the one who eats it, and then, as a consequence, restores to him lost strength and increases his vitality. Spiritual food, on the other hand, changes the person who eats it into itself. Thus, the effect proper to this Sacrament is the conversion of a man into Christ, so that he may no longer live, but Christ lives in him; consequently, it has the double effect of restoring the spiritual strength he had lost by his sins and defects, and of increasing the strength of his virtues.” “The Eucharist is the Sacrament of Love; It signifies Love, it produces Love. The Eucharist is the consummation of the whole spiritual life.” “The celebration of Holy Mass has the same value as the Death of Jesus on the Cross.” “There is no language adequate to describe the joy one experiences through this sacrament which draws sweetness from its very source and keeps alive in us the memory of the love, of which Christ gave proof during his passion.” “No other sacrament accomplishes more for our souls. It takes away sin, strengthens virtue and enriches the soul with the abundance of all spiritual gifts.” “And this is done by Divine power in this sacrament; for the whole substance of the bread is changed into the whole substance of Christ's body, and the whole substance of the wine into the whole substance of Christ's blood. Hence this is not a formal, but a substantial conversion; nor is it a kind of natural movement: but, with a name of its own, it can be called ‘transubstantiation.’

April 30, 2023 – CHARISTIC QUOTES FROM ST. JUSTIN MARTYR

“For not as common bread nor common drink do we receive these (bread and wine); but since Jesus Christ our Savior was made incarnate by the word of God and had both flesh and blood for our salvation, so too, as we have been taught, the food which has been made into the Eucharist by the Eucharistic prayer set down by him, and by the change of which our blood and flesh is nourished, is both the flesh and the blood of that incarnated Jesus.” “We call this food ‘Eucharist’, and no one else is permitted to partake of it, except one who believes our teaching to be true and who has been washed in the washing which is for the remission of sins and for regeneration and is thereby living as Christ has enjoined.” “On the day called after the sun [Sunday] there is a meeting for which all those dwelling in the cities or in the countryside come together. The records of the Apostles or the writings of the prophets are read as long as time allows. When the reader has stopped, the one who is presiding admonishes and encourages us by a sermon to the imitation of those good examples. Then we all stand up together and lift up our prayers.” “When we have finished our prayer, bread is brought forth and wine and water. The one who is presiding offers up prayers and thanksgiving according to his ability and the people acclaim their assent with ‘Amen.’”

April 23, 2023 - EUCHARISTIC QUOTES FROM ST. IGNATIUS OF ANTIOCH

“I have no taste for the food that perishes nor for the pleasures of this life. I want the Bread of God which is the Flesh of Christ, who was the seed of David; and for drink I desire His Blood which is love that cannot be destroyed.” “Let that Eucharist be held valid which is offered by the bishop or by the one to whom the bishop has committed this charge. Wherever the bishop appears, there let the people be; as wherever Jesus Christ is, is the Catholic Church.” “The Eucharist is the flesh of our Savior Jesus Christ, the flesh which suffered for our sins and which the Father, in His graciousness, raised from the dead.” “Take heed, then, to have but one Eucharist. For there is one flesh of our Lord Jesus Christ, and one cup to show forth the unity of His blood; one altar; as there is one bishop, along with the presbytery and deacons, my fellow-servants: that so, whatsoever you do, you may do it according to the will of God.” “Make an effort, then to meet more frequently to celebrate our Lord’s Eucharist and to offer praise.” “If then they who walked in ancient customs came to a new hope, no longer living for the Sabbath, but for the Lord’s Day, on which also our life sprang up through him and his death.”

April 16, 2023 - EUCHARISTIC QUOTES FROM SAINT THERESE OF LISIEUX

“Do you realize that Jesus is there in the tabernacle expressly for you - for you alone? He burns with the desire to come into your heart...don't listen to the demon, laugh at him, and go without fear to receive the Jesus of peace and love...” “Receive Communion often, very often...there you have the sole remedy, if you want to be cured. Jesus has not put this attraction in your heart for nothing.” “It is not to remain in a golden ciborium that He comes down each day from Heaven, but to find another Heaven, the Heaven of our soul in which He takes delight.” “By our little acts of charity practiced in the shade we convert souls far away, we help missionaries, we win for them abundant alms; and by that means build actual dwellings spiritual and material for our Eucharistic Lord.”

April 9, 2023 - EUCHARISTIC QUOTES FROM SAINT JOHN VIANNEY

“I throw myself at the foot of the Tabernacle like a dog at the foot of his Master.” “When you awake in the night, transport yourself quickly in spirit before the Tabernacle, saying: ‘Behold, my God, I come to adore You, to praise, thank, and love you, and to keep you company with all the Angels.’” “All the good works in the world are not equal to the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass because they are the works of men; but the Mass is the work of God. Martyrdom is nothing in comparison for it is but the sacrifice of man to God; but the Mass is the sacrifice of God for man.” “If we knew the value of the Holy Mass, we would die of joy.” “When we have communicated, if anyone said to us, ‘What are you taking home with you?’ we might answer, ‘I am taking heaven.’” “One need not say much to pray well, we know that Jesus is there in the tabernacle: let us open our hearts to him, let us rejoice in his sacred presence. That is the best prayer” “When we go before the Blessed Sacrament, let us open our heart; our good God will open His. We shall go to Him; He will come to us; the one to ask, the other to receive. It will be like a breath from one to the other.” “Go, then, to Communion. My children, go to Jesus with love and confidence. Go, to live by Him in order to live for Him. Do not say that you have too much to do.”

April 2, 2023 - EUCHARISTIC QUOTES FROM SAINT PIO OF PIETRELCINA

“If men only appreciated the value of a holy Mass, they would need traffic officers at church doors every day to keep the crowds in order.” “Every holy Mass, heard with devotion, produces in our souls marvelous effects, abundant spiritual and material graces which we, ourselves, do not know. It is easier for the earth to exist without the sun than without the holy Sacrifice of the Mass.” “My heart feels as if it were being drawn by a superior force each morning just before uniting with Him in the Blessed Sacrament. I have such a thirst and hunger before receiving Him that it's a wonder I don't die of anxiety. I was hardly able to reach the Divine Prisoner in order to celebrate Mass.” “When Mass ended, I remained with Jesus to render Him thanks. My thirst and hunger do not diminish after I have received Him in the Blessed Sacrament, but rather, increase steadily. Oh, how sweet was the conversation I held with Paradise this morning. The Heart of Jesus and my own, if you will pardon my expression, fused. They were no longer two hearts beating but only one. My heart disappeared as if it were a drop in the ocean.”

March 26, 2023 - Eucharistic Quotes from St. Augustine

“Recognize in this bread what hung on the cross, and in this chalice what flowed from His side. Whatever was in many and varied ways announced beforehand in the sacrifices of the Old Testament pertains to this one sacrifice which is revealed in the New Testament. “That Bread which you see on the altar, having been sanctified by the word of God, is the Body of Christ. The chalice, or rather, what is in that chalice, having been sanctified by the word of God, is the Blood of Christ.”

March 19, 2023 - Eucharistic Quotes from St. Teresa of Calcutta

“The humility of Jesus can be seen in the crib, in the exile to Egypt, in the hidden life, in the inability to make people understand Him, in the desertion of His apostles, in the hatred of His persecutors, in all the terrible suffering and death of His Passion, and now in His permanent state of humility in the tabernacle, where He has reduced Himself to such a small particle of bread that the priest can hold Him with two fingers. The more we empty ourselves, the more room we give God to fill us.” “If I can give you any advice, I beg you to get closer to the Eucharist and to Jesus. We must pray to Jesus to give us that tenderness of the Eucharist.” “Like Mary, let us be full of zeal to go in haste to give Jesus to others. She was full of grace when, at the annunciation, she received Jesus. Like her, we too become full of grace every time we receive Holy Communion. It is the same Jesus whom she received and whom we receive at Mass. As soon as we receive Jesus in Holy Communion, let us go in haste to give Him to our sisters, to our poor, to the sick, to the dying, to the lepers, to the unwanted, and the unloved. By this we make Jesus present in the world today.” “We cannot separate our lives from the Eucharist; the moment we do, something breaks. People ask, 'Where do the sisters get the joy and the energy to do what they are doing?' The Eucharist involves more than just receiving; it also involves satisfying the hunger of Christ. He says, 'Come to Me.' He is hungry for souls.” “When you look at the Crucifix, you understand how much Jesus loved you then. When you look at the Sacred Host you understand how much Jesus loves you now.” “The

Word again becomes flesh and dwells among us, veiled under the Species of the Sacred Host, where the same Jesus born two thousand years ago as a little babe in Bethlehem is truly, really, bodily, and personally present to us in this Most Blessed Sacrament.” “The Holy Eucharist is the continuation of Christ's incarnation on earth. The mystery of the Eucharist gives us the joy of having Christmas every day. When we come to the Blessed Sacrament we come to Bethlehem, a name which means house of bread.” “The Mass is the spiritual food that sustains me without which I could not get through one single day or hour in my life.” “The time you spend with Jesus in the Blessed Sacrament is the best time you will spend on earth. Each moment that you spend with Jesus will deepen your union with Him and make your soul everlastingly more glorious and beautiful in Heaven, and will help bring about everlasting peace on earth.”

March 12, 2024 TRANSFIGURATION OF JESUS

The transfiguration of Jesus is theophany which is the revelation of God to us. The true identity of Jesus is revealed to His disciples. He is the radiance of God himself and the brightness of the Father's glory. Transfiguration is the preview of His resurrection beyond physical appearance. It comes from the Greek word, metamorphoo, which is metamorphosis in English. It is the change that occurs when a caterpillar becomes a butterfly. His face shone like the sun and his clothes became white as light (Matthew 17:2). Transfiguration is proclamation of immortality, the victory over death. It is the reassurance and encouragement for His disciples because He openly predicted to them about His passion and death. Christ's glory is totally manifested on the Cross. It points also to our baptism when we receive the white garment, a sign of our participation in the life of Christ. Our baptism is the first regeneration, our rebirth to new life. Transfiguration is the second regeneration which is the foretaste of Christ's glorious coming when He will change our lowly bodies to be like His glorious body. We are called to listen to Jesus because He is the beloved Son of God, the Wisdom of the Father and the way of eternal insight. To listen to Him is to hear what He says, to accept what He says, to make our own what He says and to be fully identified with what He says. It is to make the choices, vision and values of Jesus our own. Like Mary she treasures everything in her heart. That is why she is a doer of the Word. Peter, James and John witnessed the transfiguration of Jesus. Peter denied Him three times. But after His resurrection He asked Peter three times, 'Do you love me?' (John 21: 15). Peter replied, "Yes, Lord, you know that I love you" (John 21: 16). He loves Jesus the most. John is the beloved disciple. James is the first apostle who died a martyr's death. All of them love Him the most. To have access to Christ's glory is to fall in love with Him. And to love the way He loves.

March 5, 2023 - THE TEMPTATIONS OF JESUS

In the Gospel of Matthew, we learned that Jesus was led by the Spirit into the wilderness to be tempted by the devil (Matthew 4:1). The temptation of Jesus happens after His baptism when He was revealed as the Son of God and anointed by the Spirit. He fasted in the wilderness for forty days and forty nights (Mt 4:2). This is a transition from His private life to public life. He is about to begin His public ministry. It is the devil that tempted Jesus, not the Spirit. To tempt is to entice a person to do what is wrong so that he will stumble and fall. To test is an opportunity to choose what is right and thus come out as a better person. Gold is tested by fire. All the great

figures in the Bible were tested by God. Abraham was asked to sacrifice his son, Isaac. He passed the test and was blessed by God sparing Isaac and his descendants became like the stars in the sky and the sands on the shore. God allowed Satan to test Job by taking away his health, wealth and families. He passed the test and his health, wealth and families were restored by God a hundredfold. In the first temptation, the devil asked Jesus to turn the stones into loaves of bread (Mt 4:3). He was hungry and vulnerable after forty days and nights of fasting. The devil knows the right timing to attack. It is the temptation of the flesh enticing Jesus to use His power for His self gratification. Sensual desires like food, drink and sex are good in themselves but when they become the supreme value, they lead us to self destruction. It is also a test of the divine providence. Jesus does not fulfill His mission by being a breadbasket king. He is the bread of life that sustains us to eternal life. He said, "Man does not live on bread alone but on every Word that comes forth from the mouth of God" (Mt 4:4). Our deeper need is satisfied only by the Word of God. We are called to rely on God alone. In the second temptation, the devil brought Jesus to the holy city and made Him stand on the parapet of the temple and told Him to throw Himself down because the angels will save Him (Mt 4:5-6). 5.5 is God. You cannot serve two masters (Mt 6:24). Therefore, Jesus is tempted because He is one of us. He entered totally into our human experience. He defeated evil, sin and death forever by being radically obedient to the Father and manifesting the power of God's love that is more powerful than anything in the world.

February 26, 2023 - LOVE YOUR ENEMIES

Love your enemies! Pray for your persecutors. Be perfect just as your Heavenly Father is perfect (Matthew 5:44). Difficult words! It seems like Jesus is asking the impossible. But the point of the teachings of Jesus about retaliation and loving our enemies is to reveal the holiness of God. God is holy because He is pazzo d' amore, crazy, madly in love with us. The power and wisdom of God is the Crucified Christ. The Cross is the ultimate serving, loving and caring. For the eyes of the world, the Cross is the formula for the losers. For the eyes of God, the Cross is the formula for true peace and joy. He makes the sun rise on the good and the bad and causes the rain to fall on the just and the unjust (Mt 5:46). God's love is inclusive. He does not discriminate because He treats the good and bad alike. We are all called to holiness. What is the essence of holiness then? Holiness is to be set apart, consecrated, anointed to serve the plans and purpose of God. St. Paul said that we are temples of God and the Spirit of God dwells in that temple. If anyone destroys God's temple, God will destroy that person; for the temple of God, which you are, is holy (1 Corinthians 3:16-17). We all belong to Christ and each member has personal responsibilities for the building up of the community. To be holy is to make God's love prevail over sin because He has always the last word, not sin, evil or death. Holiness is divinization that is, to conform to God's way of being. Incarnation is God became like us so that we might become like Him. Human nature is lifted up to share in God's own life. Jesus restores the life of God within us. Sacraments draw us to the life of God because the goal of man is union with Him here and now. Therefore, holiness is to love the way God loves. We are called to witness that love is stronger than death and His mercy and compassion are limitless and more powerful than anything in the world. Love your enemies is the ultimate test of love because it is to love someone who will not love us in return. It does not mean that I have warm, nice feelings towards them. It is Agape love, a decision and choice to

work for the well being of others. It is not to hate them otherwise we reduce ourselves to their level and we become just the way they are. We are called to be sons and daughters of the Father. If we fight evil on its own terms, we will never win. It is to fight evil on God's terms. To return good for evil. To be perfect is not without faults but to be undivided and singlehearted in our love. It is to put God above all else. We need the Holy Spirit, our Divine Helper who alone can recreate, transform and change our minds and hearts.

February 19, 2023 – SERMON ON THE MOUNT

During these Sundays before the Lenten Season, we read the Gospel of Matthew and it focuses on the major teachings of Jesus which are contained in the Sermon on the Mount. Jesus is presented as the New Moses but greater than Moses because He himself is the Giver of the Law. He is the Wisdom of God, the Logos, the Word, the way of eternal insight. He is the Way, the Truth and the Life. He comes so that we will have complete joy and fullness of life, life in abundance. The Sermon on the Mount begins with the Beatitudes which are the attitudes, virtues and values based on love and will lead us to the kingdom. By living the Beatitudes, we become truly beautiful within. Jesus said, "I did not come to abolish the Law and the Prophets but to fulfill them" (Matthew 5:17). The Law in Hebrew is Torah which refers to the first five books of the Hebrew Testament namely, Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers and Deuteronomy. Jesus is a devoted Jew and He respects the Law. In fact, He is the Torah himself made flesh. He fulfills the Law because He brings it to perfection and completion. The extraordinary and the great fulfillment of the Law lie not in the teaching but in the Teacher himself. Jesus showed radical obedience to the Father, manifested the holiness of God and established communion between God and man. He did not only teach the Law but he lived it himself. His whole life was the fulfillment and the perfection of the Law. He gave the right interpretation of the Law emphasizing the Spirit of the law rather than the letter. He brought the Law into the deep recesses of the human heart. He emphasized the interiority and radical response out of love. St. Paul said, "Love is the fullness of the law." Jesus showed that in his life and revealed it clearly on the Cross. When Jesus said, "You have heard that it was said to your ancestors but I say to you" (Mt 5:21), He affirmed his divinity, His full divine authority. Hence, we are called to listen to Him because He is God himself speaking to us. When He said, "Whoever is angry with his brother is liable to judgment," He is telling us that there should be no hostility between human beings. We are called to be active agents of reconciliation because evil resides in our hearts. Human lust is the root of adultery. "For out of the heart come forth evil thoughts, murders, sexual sins, blasphemy, greed, envy" (Mt 15:19) Jesus tells us not to swear at all because a true Christian is totally honest, transparent and truthful in all things. A true disciple is a reliable person and has nothing to hide. He said, "Let your Yes mean Yes and your No mean No. Anything more is from the evil one" (Mt 5:37). God is not responsible for our sin, for it comes from human choice alone. Therefore, we are called to be open to the Spirit of God who alone can recreate, transform and bring us to new life.

February 12, 2023 - EUCHARIST: MEDICINE OF IMMORTALITY

The Eucharist is the medicine of immortality because Jesus promised that, “if any one eats of this bread, he will live forever” (John 6:51). “My flesh is real food and my blood is real drink” (John 6:55). “For God so loved the world that He gave His only Begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him may not perish but have eternal life” (John 3:16). As a medicine of immortality, the Eucharist grants us the eternal bliss of Heaven. It does not mean that we live endlessly on earth. Death is a transition from this life to a life that will never end. That is why we are never satisfied with the things on earth because we are meant to live in eternity. Only God satisfies us. He is the Supreme Good. St. Ignatius of Antioch wrote that the Eucharist is the antidote to death which means that it prevents us from dying because we live forever in Jesus Christ. In Baptism, we are incorporated in the very Body of Christ and He is the head. Therefore, Jesus who defeated death forever will also empower us to share His victory over death. Pope Francis said that the Eucharist is not a reward for the perfect but medicine for the sick. Jesus repairs our brokenness, heals our woundedness and restores the life of God within us. The Eucharist is sustenance, food and spiritual nourishment for our journey. In the Eucharist, Christ is both physician and medicine. Christ gives himself as the medicine to strengthen and preserve our souls from death and prepare our bodies to share his physical resurrection. Hence, the Eucharist is the cure to both spiritual and physical death. When we receive the Body and Blood of Christ in the Eucharist we say, “Amen” which means “So be it”, certainly, truly, an affirmation of our faith in Jesus. We are called to witness that love is stronger than death and that God’s mercy is more powerful than anything in the world.

February 5, 2023 - Real Presence of Christ in the Eucharist

The focus of our reflection today is the Eucharist. Many Catholics nowadays do not believe in the Real Presence of Christ in the Eucharist. Hence, our reflection aims to respond to this misconception and enable us to go deeper in our understanding of this wonderful, eternal gift. The Eucharist comes from the Greek word, eucharistein meaning “to give thanks” or “be thankful” or “grateful”. We are grateful because by the Blood of Jesus, the Son of God, we are healed and redeemed. He heals our woundedness, repairs our brokenness and restores the life of God within us. It is in the celebration of the Holy Mass that the eternal value of Christ’s efficacious sacrifice is made present. The Eucharist therefore, is the source and summit of the Christian life. It contains the Source and Origin of all grace, the Second Divine Person of the Holy Trinity, Jesus Christ. The bread and wine that we offer during the Holy Mass become the Body and Blood of Jesus Christ through the power of the Holy Spirit and the instrumentality of the priest. The whole Christ is truly present that is, His body, blood, soul, and divinity. Under the appearances of bread and wine, the glorified Christ is present. During the Last Supper, Jesus instituted the sacrament of the Eucharist to perpetuate the sacrifice of the Cross throughout the ages and to entrust to the Church a memorial of His death and resurrection. It is our spiritual nourishment. It is a table fellowship that anticipates our

January 29, 2023 – The Gospel of the Beatitudes

The Gospel about the Beatitudes this Sunday according to Matthew is very powerful. The Beatitudes refer to paths toward authentic happiness, blessedness and being favored by God. Jesus is presented as the New Moses but also greater than Moses. He teaches his disciples about the essential, the absolute and the supreme good. He said that I have come so that your joy may be complete and that you may have fullness of life. The Beatitudes are attitudes, virtues and values of the Kingdom of heaven. They are not visible, external blessings nor worldly ones. The blessings are internal characteristics that each disciple has to develop. They are God's gifts to those who are humble, open and receptive to the promptings of the Holy Spirit. The first four beatitudes like, "Blessed are the poor in spirit, blessed are those who mourn, blessed are the meek, blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness", describe the heart of the person who is rightly related to God. The rest of the beatitudes like, "Blessed are the merciful, blessed are the pure in heart, blessed are the peacemakers, and the persecuted", describe how such a person relates to other people. The Beatitudes reveal the core of Christian living and that is our deep love of God and of our neighbor. We are called to rely on God alone because our world creates false gods and security. The Beatitudes lead us to a right, harmonious relationship with God, with creation, with others and with ourselves. Finally, the Beatitudes point to Jesus who is poor, humble, meek, mournful, merciful and suffering servant.

January 22, 2023 - Feast of St. Agnes, Virgin and Martyr

When Bishop Robert McElroy called me two years ago and told me that I am assigned as Pastor of St. Agnes Catholic Church, I had mixed feelings. I was shocked, surprised and excited because to be assigned as pastor of a parish is a great task and responsibility. It is also a sign of the bishop's trust in me. Moreover, I was also scared because the parish is new to me and I'm not so familiar with the life St. Agnes. After almost two years in the parish, I began to love St. Agnes because at a young age she understood her calling and purpose in life. She dedicated her whole life to Jesus. God became the center in her life putting Him above all else. What a great saint! She is an example to young people today. All of us are called to put Jesus as the absolute, essential and supreme good in our lives. She was a courageous woman. She was not afraid to die. She understood that love is greater than death and that God can bring the best from the worst, the most wonderful from the unexpected places. She centered her life on the Cross of Jesus because the Cross is the key in knowing and loving God. Jesus is everything to her. The image of a lamb beside her signifies that her life is a precious offering to God, a sacrifice for the salvation of souls. When somebody wanted to dishonor her, that person became blind and she healed him by her prayer. What a selfless person! Jesus is the greatest gift of the Father to us. He is the fulfillment of all God's promises and rewards. He fulfills the yearning and longing of the people of Israel, the longing to see the face of God and be seen by God. Through him, the great light of liberation has dawned, the gathering of God's people is fulfilled. By following Him we are tasked to continue the gathering of all people to God like St. Agnes. Jesus called St. Agnes to greater intimacy with Him and be an instrument of His love and care to others. We are all called to be partners of God in spreading the Good News that His kingdom is in our midst inviting us to allow God's loving power reign in our hearts Viva St. Agnes! Pray for us!

January 15, 2023 – ORDINARY TIME

After the celebration of the Feast of the Baptism of the Lord, we begin the Ordinary Time of our liturgy. Ordinary Time refers to those periods that fall outside of the major liturgical seasons and they are not ordinary at all. It does not mean that it is not important. Ordinary Time is called "ordinary" because the weeks are numbered. The Latin word ordinalis, which refers to numbers in a series, stems from the Latin word ordo, from which we get the English word order. Thus, the numbered weeks of Ordinary Time, represent the ordered life of the Church—the period in which we live our lives neither in feasting (as in the Christmas and Easter seasons) or in more severe penance (as in Advent and Lent), but in watchfulness and expectation of the Second Coming of Christ. Therefore, Ordinary Time is the part of the year in which Christ, the Lamb of God, walks among us and transforms our lives. There's nothing "ordinary" about that! The liturgical color for Ordinary Time is green which refers to spiritual growth. It means movement of time towards its fulfillment and that fulfillment is Jesus who is the Alpha and Omega, the beginning and the end. God is the author of time. Sunday is the sacrament of redeemed time and like all sacraments it is simultaneously a point of arrival and departure for Christians on their way to the fullness of the kingdom. Celebration of Sunday is the identifying mark of the Christian community which comes together, remembering that on the first day of the week the Lord of life was raised up and creation came at last to completion. That is why every Sunday is a celebration of the Resurrection of the Lord who defeated evil, sin and death forever. Thus, Ordinary Time is faithful, prayerful and active vigilance for the Glorious Coming of the Lord.

-January 8, 2023 - GOD ABOVE ALL ELSE

Happy New Year! We started this New Year 2023 by celebrating Mary, the Holy Mother of God. And it is fitting because Mary is the Mother of the Redeemer and the redeemed as well. Through her unconditional yes, God who is invisible became visible. That is our task this new year, to make God visible by putting him above all else in our lives and by becoming partners of God in transforming our world, creating new heavens and new earth. Like our Patroness, St. Agnes, at a young age she understood already that her life was not about herself but about God, to serve the plans and purpose of God. And God's plan and purpose is our well being, our wholeness, our salvation. Jesus said that your joy may be complete and that you have fullness of life. On January 21st, we will celebrate the feast day of our Patroness and it is important that we imitate her by following her great love of Jesus and spreading her heroic life story. St. Agnes, also called Saint Agnes of Rome, virgin and patron saint of girls, is one of the most celebrated Roman martyrs. According to tradition, Agnes was a beautiful girl, about 12 or 13 years old, who refused marriage, stating that she could have no spouse but Jesus Christ. Her suitors revealed her Christianity, which was condemned as a cult, and in punishment she was exposed in a brothel. Awed by her purity and presence, all but one of the Roman youths left her untouched; in his attempt to violate her, the sole attacker was miraculously struck blind, whereupon Agnes healed him with prayer. Later, after refusing to renounce her faith, she was murdered during the persecution of the Christians by the Roman emperor Diocletian and was buried beside the Via Nomentana. As we celebrate the New Year, let us imitate the virtue and

courage of St. Agnes by making God visible in our lives through our faith, compassion, mercy and love.

January 1, 2023 - GOD AMONG US

God pitched His tent among us! This is God's dream! To be one of us, human like us in all our weaknesses, limitations and vulnerabilities. For a child is born to us! God fulfilled his promise of salvation by sending his only begotten Son to us. He is the fullness of love, the greatest sign of God's love. Jesus is fully human and fully divine. That is why, Christmas is always a celebration of love, joy, of giving and sharing. Our Christian life therefore is a joyful life because God is present in our journey. He walks with us. Jesus manifested himself two thousands years ago to the shepherds, to the wise men, to Mary and Joseph, to his disciples. They recognized him and accepted him as the Messiah and Savior. However, his own people rejected him especially the powerful. In our times today God continues to manifest himself in many ways. At times we recognize him. Other times we reject him. We encounter God in our day to day experience. In moments of trials, sufferings, joys, triumphs, hopes, fears, defeats and successes that come to us each day, God is there. This reminds me of a story of a woman who dreamed that Jesus would visit her the next day. The following morning, she cleaned the house thoroughly, prepared a sumptuous meal and put on her best clothes. Later, a neighbor came to borrow money. But she did not entertain her neighbor's plea because her mind was on her expected visitor. Another asked her to watch their sick child. She also turned down the request. A third came to ask for her help to settle a misunderstanding in the family but again she refused. Meanwhile, Jesus failed to show up at the woman's house. When Jesus appeared again in her dream that evening, the woman asked why he failed to keep his promise. Jesus told her he did come three times but was turned away each time. How about us? How did God manifest to us? What was our response? Did we accept him or ignore him? God is with us. We only have to take the time to open our eyes and see; open our ears and hear; open our hearts and feel the presence of this God among us. May we all see and hear and feel and recognize the manifestations of God in our lives today and in each day to come.

December 25, 2022 - DREAM BIG

Advent is a time to prepare the way of the Lord. He comes to us and we are invited to repent so that we are able to recognize His arrival. Repentance is metanoia, radical change of mind and heart, turning around, taking a new direction. That is why Advent is also a penitential season. It is a time of conversion and new beginning. The Lord comes to restore the life of God within us. We are created in the likeness and image of God and because of sin, that image is destroyed. Jesus is the greatest gift of God to us. It is God's initiative to send His only begotten Son into the world. God loved the world so much that He gave His only begotten Son so that those who believe in Him may not perish but may have eternal life. Sin, evil and death are not part of God's original plan. They entered into our lives because of our disobedience. God wants the best of us and He never gives up on us because He believes in us. By sending Jesus to us, we are given a chance to begin a new life and regain our original identity and

dignity. It is Jesus who restores the life of God within us so that we become truly sons and daughters of the Father and manifest that into the world. He restores the garden of paradise to us. Hence, advent season is a time to dream big because God gives us the best gift, and that is, Jesus. To dream big is to be open to God's plan and purpose for us and in the world. The dream of God is that we live with him forever in His kingdom. And that begins today when we accept the invitation to be partners of God.