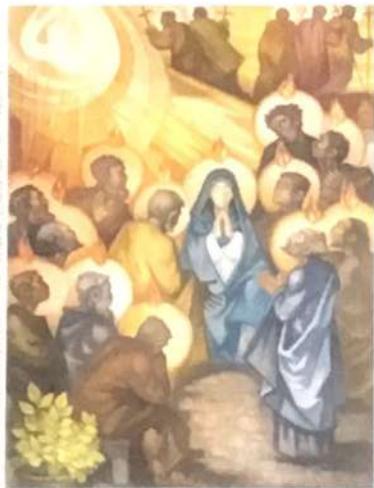


Dear Padre,

Why is there now a Mass honoring Mary after Pentecost?

The eleven apostles and some women, including Mary the Mother of Jesus, were praying in the upper room when they were filled with the Holy Spirit, which descended upon them as a strong wind and as tongues of fire (see Acts 1:13–14; 2:1–13). This is the final time Mary's name appears in the New Testament. In Luke's Acts of the Apostles, the same Holy Spirit that overshadowed Mary at the annunciation in Luke 1:38 now comes upon her during Pentecost. "Just as the Incarnation of the Spirit had formed the physical body of Christ in her virginal womb, now in the upper room the same Spirit comes down to give life to the Mystical Body" (St. John Paul II, general audience, May 28, 1997).

Thus, the Virgin Mary, full of grace and filled with the Holy Spirit, is both the Mother of Christ and Mother of the Church. "Mary is the mother of the members of Christ, because with charity she cooperated in the rebirth of the faithful into the Church," wrote St. Augustine (354–430).



In 1975, *The Roman Missal* included a votive Mass honoring the Blessed Virgin Mary under her ancient title, Mother of the Church. However, in 2018, Pope Francis elevated this votive Mass to an annual obligatory memorial in the General Roman Calendar, observed on the Monday following Pentecost (also called Whit Monday).

Mary is a model for the gifts of the Holy Spirit, exemplifying "love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, generosity, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control" (Galatians 5:22–23).

Fr. Byron Miller, CSSR
Sundaybulletin@Liguori.org

Pope Francis



The Holy Spirit...reminds us that first of all we are God's beloved children: all equal, in this respect, and all different. The Spirit comes to us, in our differences and difficulties, to tell us that we have one Lord—Jesus—and one Father, and that for this reason we are brothers and sisters!

PENTECOST HOMILY, MAY 31, 2020

Calendar

Monday
MAY 24

Blessed Virgin Mary,
Mother of the Church
Gn 3:9–15, 20
or Acts 1:12–14
Jn 19:25–34

Tuesday
MAY 25

Weekday
Sir 35:1–12
Mk 10:28–31

Wednesday
MAY 26

St. Philip Neri, Priest
Sir 36:1, 4–5a, 10–17
Mk 10:32–45

Thursday
MAY 27

Weekday
Sir 42:15–25
Mk 10:46–52

Friday
MAY 28

Weekday
Sir 44:1, 9–13
Mk 11:11–26

Saturday
MAY 29

Weekday
Sir 51:12cd–20
Mk 11:27–33

Sunday
MAY 30

The Most Holy Trinity
Dt 4:32–34, 39–40
Rom 8:14–17
Mt 28:16–20

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Our Parish COMMUNITY

May 23, 2021

Pentecost Sunday (B)

Acts 2:1–11

1 Cor 12:3b–7, 12–13 or Gal 5:16–25

Jn 20:19–23 or Jn 15:26–27; 16:12–15

And suddenly there came from the sky
a noise like a strong driving wind, and it
filled the entire house in which they were.

ACTS OF THE APOSTLES 2:2



Tongues of Fire

When I was a child, I thought the flames I saw atop the heads of the apostles in the pictures depicting Pentecost turned them into living candles. That certainly is what the pictures suggested. Only many years later did I come to realize that was exactly what had happened: the Spirit of God set them on fire.

In both the Old and New Testaments, the phrase "Spirit of God" refers to the dynamic power of God at work in the world. To be filled with the Spirit is to operate with this dynamic power. Today's first reading tells us that those in the house "filled with the holy Spirit" began fearlessly to tell of "the mighty acts of God" (Acts 2:4, 11). They were indeed set on fire.

This Spirit might be dynamic, even forceful, but it is not violent or destructive. The sequence for the feast lists some of the ways we experience the Spirit of God: the Spirit enlightens and comforts us; it refreshes us and lets us rest; it heals our wounds and washes away our guilt; it softens hearts that are stubborn and melts hearts that are cold; it grants us gifts of wisdom, understanding, counsel, fortitude, knowledge, piety, and fear of the Lord. This is a Spirit of gentle and loving power. It is a Spirit that transforms us so that we, in turn, might transform our world. In other words, it sets us on fire so that we too might fearlessly tell of "the mighty acts of God."

Sr. Dianne Bergant, CSA

FOR Reflection

- Spend some time reflecting on the characteristics of the Spirit. How have you experienced this Spirit in your life?
- How might the Spirit be working through you in the lives of others?



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 Fr. Peter Tran, Pastor—355-6405
 Tuesday—Friday 9:00 am - 4:00 pm
 Email: saintanthonylakin@gmail.com
 Website: saintanthonylakin.org

Molly Shelden DRE 451-0548
 RCIA 355-6405
 Gwen Waechter, Parish Council Chair 272-1030
 Tressa Powers, Finance Council Chair 355-6206
 Altar Society President, Nanette Rice 355-7676
 Tom Bachman, Grand Knight 640-8259
 Prayer Line Starters, Allison Bushek 355-1696
 & Nanette Rice 355-7676

MASS INTENTIONS FOR THE WEEK

Monday, May 24 8:00 a.m. Charles & Eileen Hoff+
Tuesday, May 25 8:00 a.m. Ron Gorges+
Thursday, May 27 8:00 a.m. Dorothy Hoffman
Friday, May 28 12:15 p.m. Harold Smith
Saturday, May 29 4:00p.m. For Rain
Sunday, May 30 9:00 a.m. Bamburger Family

May 22, 4:00 p.m. Karen Burden
 May 23, 9:00 a.m. Fred Jones
 May 29, 4:00 p.m. Tom Bachman
 May 30, 9:00 a.m. Alvin Bergkamp
 June 5, 4: 00 p.m. Debbie Frederick
 June 6, 9:00 a.m. Julie Kaps
 June 12, 4:00 p.m. Karen Burden
 June 13, 9:00 a.m. K of C
 June 19, 4:00 p.m. Tom Bachman
 June 20, 9:00 a.m. Mike Broeckelman

Thank you so much for your ministry!

Reconciliation: Confessions will be heard every Saturday at 3:00 p.m. and every Sunday at 8:00 a.m. every Friday from 4:15—4:50 p.m. or by appointment.

Baptism: Parents who have children to be baptized must be registered. Godparents must be 16 years of age or older and have received Confirmation and Eucharist. Please call the parish office for an appointment.

Marriage: Please contact parish priest at least four to six months before the wedding.

Anointing of the Sick: Celebrated anytime by calling a priest.

PENTECOST—MAY 23 2021



Come, Holy Spirit, fill the hearts of your faithful and kindle in them the fire of your love (Luke 3:4,6)

Do you believe that this Sunday May 23 is the last day of the Easter Season? Time goes by so fast. This Sunday we celebrate the Solemnity of the Pentecost.

My friends, like many actions of God, the gift of the Holy Spirit --- God himself --- will impact our lives only to the degree that we let him, only to the degree that we invite God’s Spirit to come alive within us and guide us on our journey. God always respects our freedom, and therefore doesn’t force himself on us. Rather, he provides us every opportunity to experience him to the fullest --- in all that we say and do. But like Mary we need to say “yes” --- need to be willing to let him be everything we need him to be and be willing to let ourselves be everything he wants us to be.

He can be the wind in our lives --- not holding us back, but gently nudging us forward down the path God has chosen for us. To truly “take off” in life we need to not be pushing against the Spirit, but rather be pointing ourselves in the direction the Spirit is pointing.

He can be a fire within --- keeping us motivated and excited and committed to doing the right thing, the holy thing, the God-like thing every moment of every day. The fire of the Spirit doesn’t burn. It warms and inspires and guides. And he can be the breath that sustains us, be the very stuff that keeps us going --- even when things get tough.

The breath of the Spirit is not something to protect ourselves from or avoid. Rather, the Spirit is to be breathed in, deeply --- providing the spiritual “oxygen” that gives life --- the new, transformed life won for us by the Lord Jesus.

So let’s allow God’s Spirit to do what he wants to do --- make us the beautiful, loving, compassionate people God created us to be. Come Holy Spirit! Come!

Fr. Peter Tran

COLLECTION for May 16, 2021: Envelopes: \$540; Loose: \$116; Online Giving: \$459.10; Total \$1115.10; +Average Weekly Expense: \$1,761.17. Income over/under (- 646.07)

Thank you so much to your faithful stewards for supporting our parish, diocese, and worldwide Church.

THANK YOU Molly Shelden will be stepping down next year as the Director of Religious Education. A profound THANK YOU for her many years of faithful service to our parish as DRE. Her generous time, talent, patience, kindness, and love for our children to learn more about the Lord and His Church are greatly appreciated. May the loving God reward her and pour down many blessings upon her.

DRE—(CCD DIRECTOR) As you have known Molly Shelden has resigned as our DRE after many years of faithful service. Our parish is looking for a new DRE or CCD Director to supervise our parish Religious Education for our children. If you are interested in serving this position please contact Mrs. Karen Burden (355-6833 or Fr. Peter Tran (355-6405)

SINCERE SYMPHATHY & PRAYERS Our deepest sympathy and prayers to you, Twila and your family on the passing of your beloved husband, Harold Smith. May the Almighty God wrap His loving arms around you and the entire family and give you peace. May He Rest In Peace!

VOCATION VIEW Peter and the Apostles preach with a power and conviction that can only be attributed to the Spirit dwelling among them. Is God calling you to speak for Him in our day and age? (Acts 2:1-11)

STEWARDSHIP THOUGHT St. Paul reminds us today that all of our gifts have their source in the Holy Spirit and that those gifts are given “for the common good.” What gifts are mine to share?

PRAYER OF THE WEEK (Adapted from the Solemn Blessing for Pentecost) Father of light, you have enlightened the minds of your disciples through the outpouring of the Holy Spirit. Bless us and give us the gifts of your Spirit forever. May that fire that hovered over the disciples as tongues of flame burn out all evil from our hearts and make us glow with pure light. May the sound of the Spirit inspire us to share our one faith with the many people who are in need of your love and guidance. We ask this in the name of Jesus, our Lord. Amen.

UNDERSTANDING THE GOSPEL OF THE WEEK - THE PENTECOST (John 20: 19-23)

Peace Peace be with you was a familiar greeting among Jews. Peace was the great hope God’s people had for the world. Jesus’ gift of peace also frees the disciples from fear. The disciples desperately need this freedom. As they go forth from their locked room to proclaim the gospel, they will meet resistance, hostility, and outright rejection
For testimony Before he was killed, Jesus promised to send the Holy Spirit (14:15-18). Now the risen Jesus sends his followers to continue his ministry of loving people even to death (15:12-13). They don’t go alone: the Spirit makes them inseparable from Jesus. The Spirit is also the one who will speak through them, giving testimony to the truth (15:26-27).

New creations Jesus breathes on his disciples just as God once breathed life into the first human being (Genesis 2:7). Now that these disciples share in the life that comes from the risen Jesus, they share his power to bring others into union with God. However, they will also hold people accountable for refusing to accept that Jesus brings salvation to all (v.23) (www.oursundayreadings)

UNDERSTANDING THE FIRST & SECOND READING (Acts 2:1-11)

Fulfilling his promise In his Gospel (Book One) Luke emphasizes that the Holy Spirit is with Jesus. At the end of Luke’s Gospel, Jesus promised to share the Spirit with his disciples. Today’s passage from Book Two shows the fulfillment of that promise.

Claiming Pentecost Pentecost was the Greek name for the Feast of Weeks (Shavuot). It was originally a harvest festival celebrated about fifty days after Passover. The feast evolved into a commemoration of God’s giving of the law (Torah) on Mount Sinai, where fire was a sign of God’s presence (Exodus 19:18). The Hebrew word ruah means wind, breath or spirit. In this passage all three meanings are implied. God breathes his Spirit into those who believe in the saving power of Jesus’ death and resurrection. The Jewish feast of Pentecost has thus come to assume new meaning for Christians.

A summary story Right before his Ascension Jesus told his disciples that they would be his witnesses throughout the world (Acts 1:8). Acts of the Apostles is the story of how the holy Spirit helped Jesus’ followers to preach and build up God’s church. Today’s passage sums up the first part of the book: Jews from all over the world hear what God has accomplished through Jesus’ death and resurrection.

1 CORINTHIANS 12:3b-7,12-13: All kinds of people The Christians at Corinth included people of different ethnicities, religious backgrounds, education, and income levels, which led to internal division and snobbery. Some people thought they were better than others because they had better spiritual gifts.

All kinds of gifts Paul makes it clear that every person who believes in Jesus has the holy Spirit within them and that every gift comes from the Spirit. Therefore, no one should presume to think they’re better than anyone else. Moreover, the gifts of the Spirit aren’t given to make people feel special but to strengthen God’s church. The Spirit’s presence within individuals draws them into a community. The Spirit bestows gifts that makes the community diverse but also interdependent. The community will be unhealthy and ineffective if its members don’t value each other and work together. (www.oursundayreadings)

CATHOLIC QUESTION AND ANSWER

Q. The New Testament doesn't mention seven gifts of the Holy Spirit. So why was I taught about them at Confirmation?

A. How did the church arrive at the idea that we receive seven divine gifts at Confirmation? We memorized them once—wisdom, understanding, knowledge, counsel, fortitude, piety, and fear of the Lord—in case the bishop quizzed us before the sacrament. While Acts of the Apostles and Saint Paul's writings say a lot about the Holy Spirit's activity, bestowing these seven particular gifts never comes up. The prophet Isaiah lists the gifts as we know them (see Isa 11:1-2). The Hebrew translation of this passage lists only six; the seventh, piety, derives from the Septuagint translation from which the Catholic Bible emerges. Isaiah foretells that these special characteristics will be revealed in the one who comes "from the stump of Jesse"—that is, the promised king of David's lineage who will come to rescue the people. This future king is often identified as the Messiah (Hebrew for "anointed one").

When Jesus arrives, born of David's line eight centuries after the time of Isaiah, he's recognized as the possessor of such divine gifts and therefore the fulfillment of the prophecy. He's acknowledged as the Christ (Greek for "anointed one"). In turn, Jesus promises to send the same Spirit that dwells in him to his disciples. In the upper room at Pentecost, his promise is fulfilled. So when you and I are anointed with the oil of chrism at Confirmation, it follows that we "anointed ones" are recipients of these divine gifts.

Perhaps you don't feel wise or courageous. I'm not the best specimen of piety either. Manifesting these gifts isn't something we do automatically after we're confirmed, the way superheroes suddenly manifest their superpowers. As theologians say, we have to become "docile" to the work of the Spirit, to make ourselves habitually open to the Spirit's influence. That means putting the ego aside—something we don't do without a great deal of practice. At the same time, we understand that we are granted genuine spiritual superpowers known as charisms. These special favors bestowed by the Spirit are provided for the benefit of the church. Saint Paul recites a litany of such charisms including wisdom, knowledge, faith, healing, mighty deeds, prophecy, discernment, and the gift of tongues. Paul later lists teaching, service, and administration as additional spiritual gifts. These aren't meant to override Isaiah's list of seven. On the contrary, they suggest that the Holy Spirit is ready to provide whatever gifts the church requires. (Alice L. Camille)

Pentecost marks the occasion of God sending the Holy Spirit upon Jesus' disciples after his Resurrection. The book of Acts describes how the disciples were gathered together in one place on the day of Pentecost. The Jewish feast of Pentecost (Shavuot or the Feast of Weeks) was a day that commemorated the giving of the law to Moses, a day soon to be marked as well by the giving of the Holy Spirit. On Pentecost, the Holy Spirit gave the disciples the strength to fulfill their commission to spread the Good News of Jesus. The Solemnity of Pentecost, which crowns and fulfills the Easter season, is a good time to pray for a deeper indwelling of the Holy Spirit. Prayer to the Holy Spirit
Let us invoke him so that he will irrigate, warm and straighten, so that he will pervade us with the power of his sacred flame and renew the earth. Let us pray for his with all our hearts at this time, in these days. Amen. (US Catholic Conference of Bishops)

SOLEMNITY OF PENTECOST SING A NEW CHURCH INTO BEING

Pentecost celebrates crowded places, multiple languages, and diverse people uniting in one Spirit. It's a hard feast to celebrate during a pandemic in an era clouded by social conflict. All the more reason to challenge ourselves by celebrating not only what makes us the same, but also what makes us different. God showers on the world "gifts that differ," as Benedictine hymnist Delores Dufner declares. So "Bring the hopes of every nation;/ bring the art of every race. /Weave a song of peace and justice;/ let it sound through time and space." And let the church say: Amen! (Prepare the Word)

SOLEMNIDAD DE PENTECOSTÉS CANTAR LA CREACION DE UNA NUEVA IGLESIA

Pentecostés celebra los lugares concurridos, las múltiples lenguas y la diversidad de personas que se unen en un solo Espíritu. Es una fiesta difícil de celebrar durante una pandemia en una época empañada por los conflictos sociales. Razón de más para desafiarnos a nosotros mismos celebrando no sólo lo que nos hace iguales, sino también lo que nos hace diferentes. Dios derrama sobre el mundo "dones que difieren", como declara la cantora benedictina Delores Dufner. Así que "Traed las esperanzas de cada nación;/ traed el arte de cada raza. / Tejed un canto de paz y justicia;/ que suene a través del tiempo y del espacio". Y que la iglesia diga: ¡Amén!

The Crucial Importance of Attending Sunday Mass



“One day within your courts is better than a thousand elsewhere.” *Psalm 84:10*

To the faithful in the Catholic Diocese of Dodge City,

1. On March 17, 2020, I issued a dispensation from the obligation to attend Mass on Sundays and holy days of obligation because of the uncertainty caused by Covid-19.¹ On Pentecost weekend, May 22-23, this dispensation will be lifted, unless people have valid reasons.² The Covid-19 pandemic has been a reality that we have dealt with for over a year. Thankfully, we are now getting back to what we all consider a more normal way of life.

2. The reason I am writing to you is because I love and care for each of you. I deeply want what is best for you. All of us are created to love and to be loved. No one loves you more than Jesus. No one cares for you more than Jesus. What is love? Love is when we want the absolute best for another other. Jesus wants what is best for us. He created us, He knows us and desires each person to be with Him for all eternity—and that is what I want for you, too!

3. The pandemic has been with us for long enough to influence our lifestyles, particularly staying home from Mass. While technology is a wonderful tool, it can never substitute for the reality of attending Mass in person. It is important we are clear about this distinction. The Letter to the Hebrews (10:24-25) reminds us, “... let us consider how to provoke one another to love and good deeds, not neglecting to meet together, as is the habit of some, but encouraging one another, and all the more as you see the Day approaching.” Not neglecting to meet together is a direct reference to the Christian practice of attending Mass on Sunday. We are called to come together in the flesh and actively participate in the Eucharistic meal - passively observing a television is not a substitute for reality.

4. It is part of the very nature of our faith that we have a personal and in-person encounter with Christ through His Church. As stated in the Sacred Liturgy *Sacrosanctum Concilium* 2, “the liturgy, ‘through which the work of our redemption is accomplished,’ most of all in the divine sacrifice of the Eucharist, is the outstanding means whereby the faithful may express in their lives, and manifest to others, the mystery of Christ and the real nature of the true Church.” Further, Code of Canon Law, c. 1247 states that “on Sundays and other holy days of obligation the faithful are bound to participate in the Mass.”

5. Some may express frustration about the obligation of attending Mass, claiming, “The Church is all about the rules.” I admit I did not always like this rule either. Growing up as a child, my father made it very clear that living in his house meant going to Mass on Sundays. Now, looking back I can see that my dad enforced that rule because he loved me. Jesus said, “Remain in my love.” My father did not want me to be separated from God by making the wrong choice.

6. Jesus said that we will remain in His love if we keep His commandments (John 15:10). God gave the Ten Commandments to us because He loves us and cares for us. He knows what is best for us! The First Commandment is to love God with our whole being and the Third Commandment is to keep holy the Sabbath (which for us is Sunday). These are God’s commandments. When we do not follow God’s ways, our priorities are not in order. We also know that rules without a relationship often lead to rebellion in most situations. Jesus desires to be in a relationship with us. Hopefully, we desire to have a relationship with Him. Attending Mass is being in relationship with Him and His love for us. When we go to Mass in person, we choose Jesus!

Who Are We?

7. Several years ago, I read an article that involved a former player of one of the most successful football coaches ever. On the first day of practice, the coach asked the team three questions: Who are we? Where are we going? How are we going to get there? In

1) I want to apologize to any of you that were hurt by the decision to close Masses to the public for the six weeks that we did.

2) Valid reasons include being ill or elderly. Additionally, those who are unable to attend Mass because of extenuating circumstances, such as traveling or work, must seek individual dispensation from their pastor.

other words, what is our identity, what is our goal, and what are the strategies to get us there. This led not only to success on the field, but also success in other walks of life.

8. In the spiritual life, we can ask those same questions. Who are we? Our deepest identity is that you and I are beloved children of God our Father. Where do we want to go? Hopefully, all of us would respond, "heaven." If not, then we really do not know who we are. How do we get to heaven? By following Jesus, who is the way, the truth and the life. It is all about remaining with Jesus, who loves us more than anyone. It is not whether we live or die, but rather if we belong to Jesus or not.

9. If we are missing Sunday Mass because we do not feel it is important, or we simply put other things before God, we are likely on the wrong path. We have forgotten who we are, and this only leads to our unhappiness. St. Paul reminds us that the three things that last are faith, hope and love—not our belongings, our finances or our successes—but our faithfulness to God (1st Corinthians 13).

10. Once there was a man who ran a business. The man was frustrated with not being able to keep up his success. He realized then that he needed to focus on the one necessary thing in his life each day. Once he did this, he became very successful. The same thing is true with our spiritual life. We need to focus on the one thing necessary: becoming a disciple of the Lord. In Christ we find true fulfillment, and this is what our heart longs for, "Like a parched land my soul thirsts for you" (Psalm 143:6).

11. Attending Sunday Mass is the most important thing we do all week. There are many important events in life, but nothing is as important as participating in Sunday Mass. Coming to Mass is participating in the greatest, most passionate love story that has ever existed: celebrating the life, death and resurrection of Jesus, who comes on a rescue mission to save humanity from hell.

Back to the Beginning

12. We all know the story of Adam and Eve. They walk with God. All is well. All is beautiful. But then Satan, the devil, tempts Adam and Eve to rebel against God throwing aside their trust in Him. Who is Satan? Jesus called him a liar, the Great Accuser. Satan was originally created good by God, but then he told God, "I will not serve. I will not obey." Satan wants us to tell God the same thing. Satan wants to dislodge our loyalty to God - to disobey His commandments and cast aside our trust in His eternal love.

13. In the Garden of Eden were the Tree of Life and the Tree of Knowledge of Good and Evil. Jesus gave Adam and Eve one command; they could not eat from the Tree of Knowledge of Good and Evil. But they decided to disobey God and eat from the Tree of Knowledge of Good and Evil. This led to sin, which led to death. In the death and resurrection of Jesus, God restored the world. God did not want to lose us, and He loves us despite our sin. Not only this, but He is also inviting us to eat from the fruit of the Tree of Life once again: the Eucharist! Jesus is the new fruit of the Tree of Life! We see that God is a God of continuous second chances. He never gives up on us. He is always seeking us, no matter how far we have strayed from Him.

14. As we move through the Scriptures, we see how God desired to free His chosen people the Israelites from sin and slavery and lead them to the promised land. God did this by asking His people to take an unblemished lamb, put the blood on the doorposts (those who did so were saved) and then eat the lamb. This event was the founding of Passover. Today, Jesus is our unblemished lamb who takes away the sins of the world and leads us to the promised land, heaven. We partake of His saving act by eating the lamb, the Lamb of God who takes away the sins of the world. And in Cana (John 2:1-11), Jesus reveals his miraculous power by turning water into wine. The wedding guests are astounded that the bridegroom has saved the best wine for last. Again today, Jesus' blood on the cross becomes the "wine" that is the best wine, the wine of everlasting life. At Mass, we participate in the new and everlasting Passover!

We Are Invited: Please Say Yes!

15. In Matthew 22:1-14, Jesus tells the parable of the wedding feast. Many are invited. Sadly, some people completely ignore the invitation. Others are too busy with "important" things, and some simply do not want to come. What a deep sadness this brings the Bridegroom! Every Mass is a wedding banquet in which Jesus our Bridegroom and the faithful - us - unite. God invites you to be there! He desires you to be there! This is a foretaste of heaven. Going to Mass is saying, "I want to go to heaven." Saying no is saying, "I really do not want to be with God in the marriage feast of heaven." It is a deep heartbreak to God when we turn down this personal invitation.

16. But is it really a big deal if we miss Mass? Of course, we can still pray, talk with God wherever we are, but skipping Mass is telling God "no." Perhaps the biggest lie in our world today is that everyone goes to heaven no matter what. This is not what Jesus said or what the Church He founded teaches us. Ultimately, whether we spend our eternity in heaven or hell is determined by our relationship with God and the choices we make in our daily lives. Hell is a place where there is separation from God, an agonizing

abyss without love. But heaven is a place where there is union with God, who is ablaze with Love.

17. Why would any of us want to be separated from love? Jesus loves you, so how will you respond? He desires so much to be with you - right now - through the Eucharist. I understand that homilies and music can be uninspiring, but at Mass we receive the Eucharist – who is Jesus! We unite with Him and others through His presence. At every Mass, Jesus says, “This is my Body, given for you.” If we offer ourselves to Jesus, we too become one flesh with Him in a transforming way. We become ‘in communion’ with the God of everlasting Love. Will you give your yes to Him?

The Way to Eternal Life

18. We spend a lot of money and effort seeking ways to prolong our lives, but despite our good efforts, each of us will inevitably die. Our mortality rate is 100%. But the good news is that there is a remedy for death - the person of Jesus Christ. His Eucharistic self is the true pathway to eternal life. Jesus Himself tells us, “whoever eats my Body” will live forever (John 6).

19. I realize that many Catholics today do not believe in the Real Presence of Jesus in the Eucharist. I would never have become a priest if the Eucharist were just a piece of bread. But it is the Body and Blood of Jesus Christ. Since the beginning, the Church has proclaimed the Eucharist as the Body, Blood, Soul and Divinity of God. Jesus in the Eucharist is the most precious gift on earth, more precious than all the wealth in the world.

20. Receiving Jesus in the Eucharist is the source and summit of the Christian life because Christ not only gives us grace, He also gives Himself to us. Imagine this for a moment: The God who created the heavens and the earth - including every person - comes to be one with each one of us! This is a big deal!

The Best Pastures, The Best Food

21. Many of the faithful in our diocese are farmers and ranchers who care for cattle. They strive to provide the best quality food for their cattle so they can grow and thrive. When the food in a pasture is exhausted, they move their cattle from one area to the next to provide the best nourishment. One of my favorite images is of Jesus the Good Shepherd. A good shepherd not only lays down his life to protect his sheep - just as Jesus did - but he also leads his flock to the best pastures where they find the best food.

22. Of course, good food is necessary to sustain our bodies and give us energy, but while on earth, our appetites are only temporarily satisfied. It is only a matter of time before we are hungry again. The Eucharist, however, is spiritual food - a food which awakens our hope and deepens our capacity for life. It is a foretaste of God’s heavenly banquet which gives everlasting food. Jesus leads us to the Eternal Banquet, to unending pastures of good food!

23. “The liturgy... shows forth the Church to those who are outside as a sign lifted up among the nations under which the scattered children of God may be gathered together, until there is one sheepfold and one shepherd.”³

24. Isaiah also reminds us of God’s invitation to this heavenly meal: “All you who are thirsty, come to the water! You who have no money, come receive grain and eat. Come without paying and without cost, drink wine and milk! Why spend your money for what is not bread, your wages for what fails to satisfy? Heed me and you shall eat well, you shall delight in rich fare. Come to me heedfully, listen that you may have life” (Isaiah 55:1-6).

Seeking Fulfillment

25. We all want to be happy. We do things in our life—eat, exercise, attend social events, etc.—that make us happy. Ultimate happiness, however, comes from a relationship with God. This gives us the peace and joy that all other things cannot give. Aren’t we all longing for this?

26. I am reminded of the Samaritan woman (John 4), who went to the well for water every day but spiritually remained thirsty. When she encountered Jesus, she left her water jars at the well. Is there something missing in your life? Are you longing for more? Have all the latest gadgets and toys really fulfilled your deepest longing? The only thing that can fill that deepest longing in your life is a person, and His name is Jesus! He desires you and is longing to fill your heart with His love and peace.

3) *I Sacrosanctum Concilium 2: SECOND VATICAN COUNCIL, constitution on the Sacred Liturgy Sacrosanctum Concilium, 4 December 1963, in AAS, 56 (1964), pp. 97-134, English translation on www.vatican.va/archive/hist_council/documents/vat_ii_const_19631204_sacrosanctum-concilium_en.html*

Sin and Reconciliation

27. We are all sinners in need of God's mercy. I want to emphasize what Bishop Fitzsimmons said in his pastoral letter that he wrote 15 years ago: Missing Mass is a serious sin. Why? Because we are choosing not to be in communion with Jesus. I know some people do not want to hear this. But would you rather have your doctor tell you that you are fine when you have cancer? Or would you rather have him tell you that you are ill and show you the remedy.

28. The remedy for sin and death is the Sacraments, specifically the Sacrament of Reconciliation and the Sacrament of the Eucharist. A year or so after becoming a priest, I went to McDonald's for lunch. While I was standing in line wondering what I was going to order, a man came up to me. He was a truckdriver. He asked if I could hear his confession. It had been more than 40 years. I listened to his confession and His sins were forgiven before the Lord.

29. Some people have asked, "Do I need to go to confession before returning to Mass?" The quick answer is "Yes" and "No." The Catechism of the Catholic Church explains, "Anyone who is aware of having committed a mortal sin must not receive Holy Communion, even if he experiences deep contrition, without having first received sacramental absolution, unless he has a grave reason for receiving Communion and there is no possibility of going to confession" (CCC 1457). Basically, if you are aware of a mortal sin on your soul after examining your conscience and have the opportunity to confess your sins to a priest, then it is your duty to seek sacramental absolution. Please remember that God never tires of forgiving us and that His desire to forgive you is greater than your desire to be forgiven.

30. If you have been away from the Sacrament of Reconciliation, if you have missed Mass deliberately in the past, I urge you to please go to confession before receiving Holy Communion. This mortal sin⁴ "results in the loss of charity and the privation of sanctifying grace, that is, of the state of grace. If it is not redeemed by repentance and God's forgiveness, it causes exclusion from Christ's kingdom and the eternal death of hell, for our freedom has the power to make choices for ever, with no turning back" (CCC 1861).

Holy Days: Missing Mass Is A Big Deal!

31. I also want to mention that there are Holy Days of Obligation throughout the year. One could say these are like attending family anniversaries and birthdays at different times. They are special days. Holy days of obligation are:

Solemnity of the Mary, the Mother of God: January 1

Feast of the Ascension: 40 days after Easter, typically celebrated on the closest Sunday

Assumption of Mary into heaven: August 15

All Saints Day: November 1

Feast of the Immaculate Conception: December 8

Birth of Jesus: December 25

These are special days in the Church when we celebrate important events in the life of Jesus, His Mother Mary and the saints. I encourage you to see these days as a way of celebrating special events in the lives of those whom we love—and who love us!!!

How to Dress for Mass

32. I also want to discuss appropriate "dress" at Mass. Firstly, Jesus accepts you as you are, but at the same time, if you are attending a wedding banquet, you would likely try to wear something nice. How would you dress if someone famous came to your house? God, the King of the Universe, is the most important person ever to exist, and He comes to us at every Mass.

33. Secondly, it is important to strive for modesty in the way we dress. Our bodies are gifts from God and are temples of the Holy Spirit. I understand that fashion trends change with the times, but it is important to honor the sacredness of our physical bodies and dress in a way that respects this truth.

4) For a sin to be mortal, one has to know it is a serious sin, have full knowledge and still choose it.

Persevering in the Faith

34. St. John Vianney, the patron saint of priests, used to beg his people to keep the faith and not miss Mass because he feared they would separate themselves from God for all eternity. I want each one of you to go to heaven. I beg you, please keep the faith by saying “yes” to God and attending Mass each Sunday and the holy days of obligation. As St. John Vianney said, “If people knew how important Mass is, they would die with joy.”

35. Jesus Himself said that those who persevere in the faith will be saved. Attending Mass is persevering in the faith. We also have countless saints who remind us of Christ’s words. St. Teresa of Calcutta tells us, “God doesn’t ask us to be successful, but faithful.” The courageous martyr St. Joan of Arc said, “One life is all we have, and we live it as we believe in living it, and then it's gone. But to surrender what you are and live without belief - that's more terrible than dying - more terrible than dying young.” One life is all we have. Will we live for God? Will we say yes to His love for us?

Those Fallen Away

36. We all know people who have left the Catholic faith—our children, grandchildren or siblings. When I was a pastor in Michigan, the diocese encouraged us to pray the following prayer for the return of those who have left the faith. Prayer works wonders, and I witnessed many people returning after being away for a long time. I invite you to pray this prayer for your loved ones and those away from God.

Prayer for the Return of Non-Practicing Catholics

O Good Shepherd, you never cease to seek out the lost, to call home the stray, to comfort the frightened and to build up the wounded.

I ask you to bring them back to the practice of the faith and to remove all obstacles that prevent them from receiving your abundant mercy, which flows sacramentally through the heart of your holy Church.

Through the intercession of Mary, the Mother of God, St. Joseph, their Guardian Angels, their patron Saints and the ever-prayerful St. Monica, may you pardon their sins and unshackle them from whatever hinders their freedom to come home.

For you, O Good Shepherd, have loved us to the end and offered yourself to the Father for the salvation of all. Amen!

As your bishop and shepherd of the Diocese of Salina, and the Apostolic Administrator for the Catholic Diocese of Dodge City, I care for you deeply and desire no one to be lost. Perhaps there are some who have not been faithful to God. Jesus misses you! Please go to confession, begin again and come back to Mass. It will be the best decision you have ever made. For those faithful to the Mass obligations, thank you. I pray for your continued courage and faithfulness. May each one of us strive every day to choose God and surrender ourselves to His merciful love!

God bless you, your families and everyone in our Catholic Diocese of Dodge City!

**In Christ’s service,
Most Reverend Gerald L. Vincke
Apostolic Administrator
Catholic Diocese of Dodge City
Bishop
Catholic Diocese of Salina**

La importancia crucial de asistir a la Misa dominical

“Vale por mil un día en tus atrios”. Salmo 84, 11



A todos los fieles en la Diócesis de Dodge City,

1. El 17 de marzo del 2020, yo emití una dispensación de la obligación de asistir a Misa los domingos y los días santos de obligación debido a la incertidumbre causada por el Covid-19.¹ En el fin de semana de Pentecostés, 22-23 de mayo, esta dispensa se levantará, al menos que las personas tengan razones válidas.² La pandemia del Covid-19 ha sido una realidad con la que nos hemos enfrentado por más de un año. Agradecidamente, ya estamos regresando a lo que todos consideramos una forma de vida más normal.
2. La razón por la que les escribo es porque los amo y me preocupo por cada uno de ustedes. Deseo profundamente lo mejor para ustedes. Todos fuimos creados para amar y ser amados. Nadie te ama más que Jesús. Nadie se preocupa por ti más que Jesús. ¿Qué es el amor? El amor es cuando queremos lo mejor para el otro. Jesús quiere lo mejor para nosotros. Él nos creó, nos conoce y desea que cada persona este con Él por toda la eternidad-y eso es lo que yo también quiero para ustedes!
3. La pandemia ha estado con nosotros durante el tiempo suficiente como para influir en nuestro estilo de vida, en particular si nos quedamos en casa y no asistimos a Misa. Mientras la tecnología es una maravillosa herramienta, no puede sustituir la realidad de asistir a Misa en persona. Es importante que estemos claros en esta distinción. La Carta a los hebreos (10,24-25) nos recuerda, “... tratemos de incitarnos el uno al otro en la forma de amar y hacer el bien. No abandonen las asambleas, como algunos acostumbran a hacer, sino más bien anímense unos a otros, tanto más cuando ven que se acerca el día”. *No dejar de reunirse* es una referencia directa a la práctica cristiana de asistir a misa los domingos. Estamos llamados a unirnos en la carne y participar activamente en la comida Eucarística; observar pasivamente una televisión no es un sustituto de la realidad.
4. Es parte de la naturaleza misma de nuestra fe que tengamos un encuentro personal y en persona con Cristo a través de su Iglesia. Como se indica en la Sagrada Liturgia *Sacrosanctum Concilium* 2, “la liturgia, por cuyo medio ‘se ejerce la obra de nuestra

¹ Quiero disculparme con cualquiera de ustedes que se sintieron lastimados por la decisión de cerrar misas al público durante las seis semanas.

² Las razones válidas incluyen estar enfermo o ser anciano. Adicionalmente, aquellos que nos pueden asistir a la Misa por circunstancias atenuantes, como viajar o trabajar, debe buscar la dispensa individual de su pastor.

Redención,' sobre todo en el divino sacrificio de la Eucaristía, contribuye en sumo grado a que los fieles expresen en su vida, y manifiesten a los demás, el misterio de Cristo y la naturaleza autentica de la verdadera Iglesia". Más adelante, el *Código de Derecho Canónico* c. 1247 dice que "el domingo y las demás fiestas de precepto los fieles tienen obligación de participar en la Misa".

5. Algunos pueden expresar su frustración por la obligación de asistir a misa, afirmando: "La Iglesia es todo sobre las reglas". Admito que a mí tampoco me gusta esta regla. Cuando era niño, mi padre dejó muy claro que vivir en su casa significaba ir a Misa los domingos. Ahora, mirando hacia atrás, puedo ver que mi papá reforzó esta regla porque me amaba. Jesús dijo, "Permanezcan en mi amor". Mi padre no quería que me separara de Dios al tomar una decisión equivocada.
6. Jesús dijo que permaneceremos en su amor si guardamos sus mandamientos (Juan 15,10). Dios nos dio los diez mandamientos porque nos ama y se preocupa por nosotros. ¡Él sabe lo que es mejor para nosotros! El primer mandamiento es amar a Dios con todo nuestro ser y el tercer mandamiento es santificar el sábado (para nosotros es el domingo). Estos son los mandamientos de Dios. Cuando no seguimos los caminos de Dios, nuestras prioridades no están en orden. También sabemos que las reglas sin una relación a menudo conducen a la rebelión en la mayoría de las situaciones. Jesús desea estar en una relación con nosotros. Ojalá, que deseemos tener una relación con él. Asistir a Misa es estar en una relación con Él y su amor por nosotros. ¡Cuando vamos a Misa en persona, elegimos a Jesús!

¿Quiénes somos?

7. Hace varios años, leí un artículo que involucraba a un ex jugador de uno de los entrenadores del fútbol más exitosos de la historia. En el primer día de entrenamiento el entrenador le hizo tres preguntas: ¿Quiénes somos? ¿A dónde vamos? ¿Como vamos a llegar ahí? En otras palabras, cual es nuestra identidad, cual es nuestro objetivo, y cuáles son las estrategias para llegar allí. Esto condujo no solo al éxito en el campo, sino también el éxito en otros ámbitos de la vida.
8. En la vida espiritual, podemos hacer esas mismas preguntas. ¿Quiénes somos? Nuestra identidad más profunda es que tú y yo somos hijos amados de Dios nuestro Padre. ¿A dónde queremos ir? Ojalá, que todos respondamos, "el cielo". Si no, realmente no sabemos quiénes somos. ¿Como llegamos al cielo? Al seguir a Jesús, quien es el camino, la verdad, y la vida. Se trata de permanecer con Jesús, quien nos ama más que nadie. No se trata de si vivimos o morimos, sino de si pertenecemos a Jesús o no.
9. Si no vamos a Misa los domingos porque pensamos que no es importante, o porque simplemente ponemos otras cosas antes que Dios, es probable que estemos en el camino equivocado. Nos hemos olvidado de quienes somos, y esto nos lleva a la

infelicidad. San Pablo nos recuerda que tres cosas que duran son fe, esperanza y amor – no nuestras pertenencias o finanzas o nuestros éxitos sino nuestra fidelidad a Dios (1^{ra} Corintios 13).

10. Una vez hubo un hombre que dirigía un negocio. El hombre estaba frustrado por no mantener su éxito. Entonces se dio cuenta de que necesitaba concentrarse en la única cosa necesaria en su vida cada día. Una vez que hizo esto, tuvo mucho éxito. Lo mismo ocurre en nuestra vida espiritual. Necesitamos enfocarnos en lo único necesario: convertirnos en un discípulo del Señor. En Cristo encontramos la verdadera plenitud, y esto es lo que nuestro corazón anhela, “mi alma es una tierra sedienta de ti”, (Salmo 143,6).
11. Asistir a la misa dominical es lo más importante que hacemos durante toda la semana. Hay muchos eventos importantes en la vida, pero nada es más importante como participar en la Misa dominical. Venir a misa es participar en la historia de amor más grande y apasionada que jamás haya existido: celebrar la vida, muerte y resurrección de Jesús, quien viene en una misión de rescate para salvar a la humanidad del infierno.

De regreso al principio

12. Todos conocemos la historia de Adán y Eva. Caminan con Dios. Todo está bien. Todo es hermoso. Pero entonces Satanás, el diablo, tienta a Adán y Eva a rebelarse contra Dios, dejando de lado su confianza en Él. ¿Quién es Satanás? Jesús lo llamó mentiroso, el Gran Acusador. Satanás fue originalmente creado bueno por Dios, pero luego le dijo a Dios: “No serviré. No obedeceré”. Satanás quiere que le digamos a Dios lo mismo. Satanás quiere despojarnos de nuestra lealtad a Dios, desobedecer sus mandamientos y dejar de lado nuestra confianza en su amor eterno.
13. En el jardín del Edén estaban el árbol de la vida y el árbol del conocimiento del bien y del mal. Jesús les dio a Adán y Eva una orden; no podían comer del árbol del conocimiento del bien y del mal. Pero decidieron desobedecer a Dios y comer del árbol del conocimiento del bien y del mal. Esto condujo al pecado, que condujo a la muerte. En la muerte y resurrección de Jesús, Dios restauró el mundo. Dios no quería perdernos y nos ama a pesar de nuestro pecado. No solo esto, sino que también nos invita a comer del fruto del Árbol de la Vida una vez más: ¡la Eucaristía! ¡Jesús es el fruto nuevo del árbol de la vida! Vemos que Dios es un Dios de continuas segundas oportunidades. Él nunca se rinde con nosotros. Él siempre nos está buscando, no importa lo lejos que nos hayamos alejado de Él.
14. A medida que avanzamos en las Escrituras, vemos cómo Dios deseaba liberar a su pueblo elegido, los Israelitas, del pecado y la esclavitud y llevarlos a la tierra prometida. Dios hizo esto al pedirle a su pueblo que tomara un cordero sin mancha, pusieran la sangre en los postes de las puertas (los que lo hicieron se salvaron) y luego comieran el cordero. Este evento fue la fundación de la Pascua. Hoy, Jesús es nuestro cordero sin mancha que quita el pecados del mundo y nos lleva a la tierra

prometida, el cielo. Participamos de su acto de salvación al comer el cordero, el Cordero de Dios que quita los pecados del mundo. Y en Caná (Juan 2, 1-11), Jesús revela su poder milagroso al convertir el agua en vino. Los invitados a la boda están asombrados de que el novio haya guardado el mejor vino para el final. Nuevamente hoy, la sangre de Jesús en la cruz se convierte en el "vino" que es el mejor vino, el vino de vida eterna. ¡En la Misa participamos en la nueva y eterna Pascua!

Estamos invitados: ¡Por favor di que sí!

15. En Mateo 22, 1-14, Jesús cuenta la parábola del banquete de bodas. Muchos están invitados. Lamentablemente, algunas personas ignoran por completo la invitación. Otros están demasiado ocupados con cosas "importantes" y algunos simplemente no quieren venir. ¡Qué profunda tristeza trae esto al Esposo! Cada Misa es un banquete de bodas en el que Jesús nuestro Esposo y los fieles, nosotros, nos unimos. ¡Dios te invita a estar ahí! ¡Él desea que estés allí! Este es un anticipo del cielo. Ir a Misa es decir: "Quiero ir al cielo". Decir no es decir: "Realmente no quiero estar con Dios en la fiesta de bodas del cielo". Es un profundo dolor para Dios cuando rechazamos esta invitación personal.
16. Pero, ¿es realmente importante si nos perdemos la Misa? Por supuesto, todavía podemos orar, hablar con Dios donde sea que estemos, pero no ir a Misa es decirle a Dios "no". Quizás la mayor mentira en nuestro mundo de hoy es que todos van al cielo sin importar nada. Esto no es lo que dijo Jesús o lo que nos enseña la Iglesia que fundó. En última instancia, si pasamos nuestra eternidad en el cielo o en el infierno está determinado por nuestra relación con Dios y las decisiones que tomamos en nuestra vida diaria. El infierno es un lugar donde hay separación de Dios, un abismo agonizante sin amor. Pero el cielo es un lugar donde hay unión con Dios, que arde de amor.
17. ¿Por qué querría alguno de nosotros estar separado del amor? Jesús te ama, entonces, ¿cómo responderás? Él desea mucho estar contigo, ahora mismo, a través de la Eucaristía. Entiendo que las homilías y la música pueden ser poco inspiradoras, pero en la Misa recibimos la Eucaristía, ¡quién es Jesús! Nos unimos a Él y a los demás a través de Su presencia. En cada Misa, Jesús dice: "Este es mi Cuerpo, entregado por ustedes". Si nos ofrecemos a Jesús, también nos convertimos en una sola carne con Él de manera transformadora. Nos convertimos en "comuniión" con el Dios del Amor eterno. ¿Le darás tu sí?

El Camino de la Vida Eterna

18. Gastamos mucho dinero y esfuerzo buscando formas de prolongar nuestras vidas, pero a pesar de nuestros buenos esfuerzos, todos moriremos inevitablemente. Nuestra tasa de mortalidad es del 100%. Pero la buena noticia es que existe un remedio para la muerte: la persona de Jesucristo. Su yo eucarístico es el verdadero

camino hacia la vida eterna. Jesús mismo nos dice, "el que come mi cuerpo" vivirá para siempre (Juan 6).

19. Me doy cuenta de que muchos católicos de hoy no creen en la presencia real de Jesús en la Eucaristía. Nunca me habría hecho sacerdote si la Eucaristía fuera solo un trozo de pan. Pero *es* el Cuerpo y la Sangre de Jesucristo. Desde el principio, la Iglesia ha proclamado la Eucaristía como Cuerpo, Sangre, Alma y Divinidad de Dios. Jesús en la Eucaristía es el regalo más precioso de la tierra, más precioso que todas las riquezas del mundo.
20. Recibir a Jesús en la Eucaristía es la fuente y la cumbre de la vida cristiana porque Cristo no solo nos da la gracia, también se da a sí mismo a nosotros. Imagínese esto por un momento: ¡El Dios que creó los cielos y la tierra, incluyendo a cada persona, llega a ser uno con cada uno de nosotros!

Los mejores pastos, la mejor comida

21. Muchos de los fieles de nuestra diócesis son agricultores y ganaderos que se ocupan del ganado. Se esfuerzan por proporcionar alimentos de la mejor calidad para su ganado para que puedan crecer y prosperar. Cuando se agota la comida en un pastizal, mueven su ganado de un área a otra para proporcionar la mejor nutrición. Una de mis imágenes favoritas es la de Jesús el Buen Pastor. Un buen pastor no solo da su vida para proteger a sus ovejas, como lo hizo Jesús, sino que también lleva a su rebaño a los mejores pastos donde encuentran la mejor comida.
22. Por supuesto, la buena comida es necesaria para mantener nuestro cuerpo y darnos energía, pero mientras estamos en la tierra, nuestros apetitos solo se satisfacen temporalmente. Es sólo cuestión de tiempo antes de que tengamos hambre de nuevo. La Eucaristía, sin embargo, es alimento espiritual, un alimento que despierta nuestra esperanza y profundiza nuestra capacidad de vida. Es un anticipo del banquete celestial de Dios que da alimento eterno. Jesús nos lleva al Banquete Eterno, a pastos interminables de buena comida.
23. "La Liturgia... robustece también admirablemente sus fuerzas para predicar a Cristo y presenta así la Iglesia, a los que están fuera, como signo levantado en medio de las naciones, para que, bajo de él, se congreguen en la unidad los hijos de Dios que están dispersos, hasta que haya un solo rebaño y un solo pastor"³
24. Isaías también nos recuerda la invitación de Dios a esta comida celestial: "A ver ustedes que andan con sed, ¡vengan a las aguas! Vengan ustedes que estén sin plata,

³ *Sacrosanctum Concilium 2: SECOND VATICAN COUNCIL, constitution on the Sacred Liturgy Sacrosanctum Concilium*, 4 December 1963, in *AAS*, 56 (1964), pp. 97-134, English translation on www.vatican.va/archive/hist_councils/ii_vatican_council/documents/vat-ii_const_19631204_sacrosanctum-concilium_en.html

pidan trigo sin dinero y coman, pidan vino y leche sin pagar. ¿Para qué van a gastar en lo que no es pan y dar su salario por cosas que no alimentan? Si ustedes me hacen caso, comerán cosas ricas y su paladar se deleitará con comidas exquisitas. Atiéndanme y acérquense a mí, escúchenme y su alma vivirá (Isaías 55,1-6).

Buscando realización

25. Todos queremos ser felices. Hacemos cosas en nuestra vida (comer, hacer ejercicio, asistir a eventos sociales, etc.) que nos hacen felices. La felicidad suprema, sin embargo, proviene de una relación con Dios. Esto nos da la paz y la alegría que todas las demás cosas no pueden dar. ¿No estamos todos añorando esto?
26. Me acuerdo de la mujer samaritana (Juan 4), que iba al pozo en busca de agua todos los días, pero permanecía sedienta espiritualmente. Cuando se encontró con Jesús, dejó sus tinajas de agua en el pozo. ¿Falta algo en tu vida? ¿Estás deseando más? ¿Todos los últimos dispositivos y juguetes realmente han saciado tu más profundo anhelo? Lo único que puede llenar ese anhelo más profundo en tu vida es una persona, ¡y Su nombre es Jesús! Él te desea y anhela llenar tu corazón con Su amor y paz.

Pecado y Reconciliación

27. Todos somos pecadores necesitados de la misericordia de Dios. Quiero enfatizar lo que dijo el obispo Fitzsimmons en su carta pastoral que escribió hace 15 años: Faltar a misa es un pecado grave. ¿Por qué? Porque elegimos no estar en comunión con Jesús. Sé que algunas personas no quieren escuchar esto. Pero, ¿preferiría que su médico le dijera que está bien cuando tiene cáncer? ¿O prefiere que le diga que está enfermo y le muestre el remedio?
28. El remedio para el pecado y la muerte son los sacramentos, específicamente el Sacramento de la Reconciliación y el Sacramento de la Eucaristía. Aproximadamente un año después de convertirme en sacerdote, fui a almorzar a McDonald's. Mientras estaba en la fila preguntándome qué iba a pedir, un hombre se me acercó. Él era un camionero. Me preguntó si podía escuchar su confesión. Habían pasado más de 40 años. Escuché su confesión y sus pecados fueron perdonados ante el Señor.
29. Algunas personas han preguntado: "¿Tengo que confesarme antes de regresar a misa?" La respuesta rápida es "Sí" y "No". El Catecismo de la Iglesia Católica explica: "Quien tenga conciencia de hallarse en pecado grave que no comulgue el Cuerpo del Señor sin acudir antes a la confesión sacramental a no ser que concurra un motivo grave y no haya posibilidad de" (CIC 1457). Básicamente, si está consciente de un pecado mortal en su alma después de examinar su conciencia y tiene la oportunidad de confesar sus pecados a un sacerdote, entonces es su deber buscar la absolución sacramental. Recuerda que Dios nunca se cansa de perdonarnos y que Su deseo de perdonarte es mayor que tu deseo de ser perdonado.

30. Si ha estado alejado del Sacramento de la Reconciliación, si ha faltado a misa deliberadamente en el pasado, le insto a que se confiese antes de recibir la Sagrada Comunión. Este pecado mortal⁴ “Entraña la pérdida de la caridad y la privación de la gracia santificante, es decir, del estado de gracia. Si no es rescatado por el arrepentimiento y el perdón de Dios, causa la exclusión del Reino de Cristo y la muerte eterna del infierno; de modo que nuestra libertad tiene poder de hacer elecciones para siempre, sin retorno” (CIC 1861).

Días Santos: ¡Faltar a misa es un gran problema!

31. También quiero mencionar que hay Días Santos de Obligación durante el año. Se podría decir que son como asistir a aniversarios y cumpleaños familiares en diferentes momentos. Son días especiales. Los días santos de obligación son:

Solemnidad de María, Madre de Dios: 1 de enero

Fiesta de la Ascensión: 40 días después de Pascua, normalmente se celebra el domingo más cercano

Asunción de María al cielo: 15 de agosto

Día de todos los santos: 1 de noviembre

Fiesta de la Inmaculada Concepción: 8 de diciembre

Nacimiento de Jesús: 25 de diciembre

Estos son días especiales en la Iglesia cuando celebramos eventos importantes en la vida de Jesús, Su Madre María y los santos. Los animo a que vean estos días como una forma de celebrar eventos especiales en la vida de aquellos a quienes amamos — ¡¡y quienes nos aman!!!

Como vestirse para la Misa

32. También quiero hablar sobre el “vestido” apropiado en la Misa. En primer lugar, Jesús te acepta tal como eres, pero al mismo tiempo, si vas a asistir a un banquete de bodas, es probable que trates de ponerte algo bonito. ¿Cómo te vestirías si alguien famoso viniera a tu casa? Dios, el Rey del Universo, es la persona más importante que jamás haya existido, y viene a nosotros en cada misa.

33. En segundo lugar, es importante luchar por la modestia en la forma en que nos vestimos. Nuestros cuerpos son dones de Dios y son templos del Espíritu Santo. Entiendo que las tendencias de la moda cambian con los tiempos, pero es importante honrar el carácter sagrado de nuestro cuerpo físico y vestirnos de una manera que respete esta verdad.

⁴ Para que un pecado sea mortal, uno debe saber que es un pecado grave, tener pleno conocimiento y aun así elegirlo.

Perseverando en la Fe

34. San Juan Vianney, el santo patrón de los sacerdotes, solía rogarle a su gente que mantuviera la fe y no faltaran a Misa porque temía que se separaran de Dios por toda la eternidad. Quiero que cada uno de ustedes vaya al cielo. Les ruego que mantengan la fe diciéndole "sí" a Dios y asistiendo a Misa todos los domingos y los días santos de obligación. Como dijo San Juan Vianney: "Si la gente supiera lo importante que es la Misa, moriría de alegría".
35. Jesús mismo dijo que aquellos que perseveren en la fe serán salvos. Asistir a Misa es perseverar en la fe. También tenemos innumerables santos que nos recuerdan las palabras de Cristo. Santa Teresa de Calcuta nos dice: "Dios no nos pide que seamos exitosos, sino fieles". La valiente mártir Santa Juana de Arco dijo: "Una vida es todo lo que tenemos, y la vivimos como creemos en vivirla, y luego desaparece. Pero entregar lo que eres y vivir sin creer, eso es más terrible que morir, más terrible que morir joven". Una vida es todo lo que tenemos. ¿Viviremos para Dios? ¿Le diremos que sí a su amor por nosotros?

Aquellos que se han alejado

36. Todos conocemos a personas que han abandonado la fe católica: nuestros hijos, nietos o hermanos. Cuando era pastor en Michigan, la diócesis nos animó a rezar la siguiente oración por el regreso de aquellos que han dejado la fe. La oración hace maravillas, y fui testigo de cómo muchas personas regresaban después de estar fuera durante mucho tiempo. Los invito a hacer esta oración por sus seres queridos y aquellos que están lejos de Dios.

Oración por el Regreso de los Católicos no Practicantes

Oh buen pastor que nunca dejas de buscar a los perdidos, para llamar a casa al extraviado, para consolar a los que tienen miedo y para vendar a los heridos.

Te pido que los traigas de regreso a la práctica de la fe, y para eliminar todos los obstáculos que les impiden recibir tu abundante misericordia, que fluye sacramentalmente a través del corazón de tu santa Iglesia.

A través de la intercesión de María, la Madre de Dios, sus ángeles guardianes, sus santos patronos, y la siempre devota en sus oraciones Santa Mónica, perdones nuestros pecados y remuevas cualquier obstáculo que nos quite la libertad de regresar a casa.

*Para ti, Oh Buen Pastor, que nos amaste hasta el final y te
ofreciste así mismo al Padre para la salvación de todos nosotros.
Amen!*

Como su Administrador Apostólico de la Diócesis de Dodge City, me preocupo por usted profundamente y no deseo que nadie se pierda. Quizás haya algunos que no hayan sido fieles a Dios. ¡Jesús te extraña! Vaya a la confesión, comience de nuevo y vuelva a la misa. Será la mejor decisión que haya tomado. Para los fieles a las obligaciones de la Misa, gracias. Oro por su continuo coraje y fidelidad. ¡Que cada uno de nosotros luche todos los días para elegir a Dios y entregarnos a su amor misericordioso!

¡Dios los bendiga a ustedes, a sus familias y a todos en nuestra Diócesis de Dodge City!

En el servicio de Cristo,

Reverendísimo Gerald L. Vincke
Administrador Apostólico de la Diócesis de Dodge City