

FROM THE PASTOR

My dear brothers and sisters,

Last week I wrote about preparing for Sunday Mass throughout the week. Just as a reminder, the Mass is the most incredible activity of which we can be a part. I remember a few years ago, a teen asked me what the most extreme thing I had ever done (I think he wanted me to say *bungee jumping* or something like that). I replied that I celebrate Mass! When you know what's going on at Mass, you know this to be true. By preparing ourselves for Mass, we open ourselves to receive more of the extreme gifts and love that God so wants to give us.

So, how can we prepare right before Mass. We can start on our way to Mass. What do we do in the car on the way to Mass? Are we listening to secular music on the radio, yelling at the kids, or zoning out? The ride to Mass is a great opportunity to prepare to enter into the *sacred*. We might pray (alone or with the others in the car): whether lifting up special intentions or praying with the "formulas" (Our Fathers, Hail Marys, etc.). We could have someone read through the readings (again). We may turn on Christian music instead of secular music. Or we could spend it in silence (this is usually only possible if you are driving alone!). The point is that we can prepare on the way there.

Once we get to the Church, we usually sign ourselves with the sign of the Cross after dipping our fingers in Holy Water. Let's not rush through this too quickly. In this small act, we are reminding ourselves of our Baptism. Remember that in Baptism, God adopted us as His sons and daughters, and made us full heirs to the Kingdom! At the heart of Baptism, we are placed in the heart of our Triune God (Father, Son, and Holy Spirit), and under the sign of the saving death of Christ (the sign of the Cross). This simple act of signing ourselves with Holy Water reminds us of our fundamental relationship with Almighty God – where the Father spoke to our hearts (as He did to Jesus) saying, "You are my son, you are my daughter; I'm pleased with you!" Hopefully we take the time to recognize this great gift the next time we enter the Church!

Then we go to our pew. Before entering, we either genuflect to the Tabernacle (which holds the Holy Eucharist), or bow to the Altar (the sacred table on which bread and wine become Jesus' Body and Blood). Then, we can kneel to pray. This is a great opportunity to ask God to open our hearts, minds and souls to His grace in the Mass, to re-examine our consciences and ask for forgiveness, or to spend time offering God our needs and the needs of others.

Matthew Kelly suggests this: get a Mass journal and write in it: **Lord, show me in this Mass one way I can become a better version of myself.** This simple act can prepare us to receive the gift from God at Mass. When something strikes us at Mass (and it always will, if we are open to it), we then write that one thing down, and look at it throughout the week.

Soon, Mass will start and we need to be ready to receive the greatest gifts that God wants to give us!