

Dear Friends,

I hope you found last week's article about the process of canonizing saints helpful and informative. How the Church makes saints is now clear. How saints become saints is, of course, by their witness to the Catholic faith, especially a sign of holiness that is visible to the world, thereby inspiring us to a greater sense of holiness. Yet, there is another important dimension of the saints that has been a little less clear over recent years. I wish to conclude this week's trio of articles by uncovering importance of the communion of saints in Catholic worship.

During the celebration of Mass, as well as the celebration of all sacraments, the communion of saints are at worship with us. The theology of Catholic worship holds that liturgy (public worship) is the wedding (joining together by God) between heaven and earth. We gather to worship God together with all of His creation and the communion of saints is an integral part of that order. This is one reason why churches are adorned with images of saints in that they are visible reminders of a reality that is not yet seen: heaven. These depictions remind us of particular saints in the history of faith but also a reminder that they are worship with us interceding in their place at the heavenly banquet. At St. Mary's Church, the saints are depicted in both stained glass windows and statues. The statues around the Church are, for the most part, obvious, but the saints in the high altar, because of their size and color scheme are not. From left to right, Peter, Matthew, Mark, Luke, John and Paul serve as the patrons of this stunning altar. It is an amazing sight to gaze upon both in private prayer and at Mass.

This was the view that all peoples had in the years before the Second Vatican Council in the mid 1960s. Up until that point, the theology of Catholic worship was that the priest and people face together the liturgical east, where the Messiah would come from, and together they would be facing God and the heavenly realm, offering Him a sacrifice of worship and praise. As part of this order, statues of saints and biblical scenes were not only prominent on the altar and in the sanctuary but vital to worship. They provide a more concrete view of heaven than our imagination is capable of on its own.

I have heard certain phrases which describe the posture of the priest celebrant facing Liturgical East as "when the priest has his back to the people" or "when the priest is saying Mass" as if that had no effect on the people, whether present or not. This is unfortunate and demonstrates a shallow understanding of Catholic worship, and also pits the priest against the people he is called to serve. Language that separates them from one another, though the vocations are distinct, should be avoided. So to is the notion that "what I can see makes it more real:" it is a mystery which means it cannot be seen thought human eyes, though it can be attained, and its effect does not depend on if you can see it or not (think of doubting Thomas!). And, the Eucharistic prayer is directed toward the Father in Heaven, not us. If you feel you need to see it is probably more for psychological reasons, not spiritual ones.

Because of the solemn nature of this Mass for our parish feasts, I will be offering Mass at the high altar for the 5:30pm Mass on November. If you have not attended a Mass with this posture of worship, I invite you to do so. If you have preconceived notions or a memory of what you thought it was before the late 1960s, it might be an opportunity to revisit it with a new

understanding. The following day, Saturday, November 2, I will offer a Mass in Latin at the High Altar at 11:00am for the Commemoration of All Souls.

We must also remember that the saints are the members of the Church who have arrived at perfect union with Christ. This is something that we long for and gives more credence to the purpose and meaning of saints. We too long for communion with God, especially as our age and understanding increase. My hope is that the next time you encounter the Lord in the Mass, you see the depictions of saints as integral component Catholic worship, more than just mere statues and windows.

In addition, I hope that we see ourselves as saints in the making.

In Christ,

Fr. Jones

Reflection from the first Miraculous Medal Novena on October 14.

“Mystical Rose.”? Blessed Henry Newman once said that *“Mary is the most beautiful flower ever seen in the spiritual world. It is by the power of God’s grace that from this barren and desolate earth there ever sprung up at all flowers of holiness and glory; and Mary is the Queen of them all. She is the Queen of spiritual flowers; and therefore, is called the Rose, for the rose is called of all flowers the most beautiful. But, moreover, she is the Mystical or Hidden Rose, for mystical means hidden.”* A rose, like all flowers, start out as a small seed, and this seed has a destiny. It was preordained to be the most particular flower which was hidden away, buried in the earth, waiting for the appointed time to blossom and appear. When it does blossom and appear, it is the most beautiful of flowers. Our Blessed Lady, too, did not appear in salvation history fully grown out of nowhere. Her beginnings go back into the midst of time, before time was created It begins in the infinite, all Omniscient mind of God.

But one may ask, doesn’t a rose have thorns? Yes, they do. And they prick and pierce. So too does our Blessed Mother have a piercing in her soul by a thorn the size of a sword. “And you yourself a sword shall pierce so the hearts of many may be revealed.” (Lk. 2:35). Yes, she was pierced through at the sufferings of her Son, but this piercing also encapsulates her sufferings for all of us – her spiritual children. At the cross this piercing was the deepest and most painful at the sight of her Son, but notice what else took place the cross. She was given to us as our mother, “behold Your Mother” (John 19:27). So she encompasses us in her heart and we are truly her children. She loves us as only a perfect mother can and the devil hates that. For as St. John tells us in the Apocalypse that “the dragon was enraged with the woman, and he went to make war with the rest of her offspring, those who keep the commandments of God and have the testimony of Jesus Christ” (Rev 12:17). My friends, we are in a spiritual battle whether we realize it or not and Mary is like our heavenly general leading us on to victory.

Finally, Blessed John Henry Newman also called Mary the “hidden” rose because of her assumption, her body is now hidden from us in heaven. Since she is now in heaven, body and

soul, it is a foretaste of what we shall hope to become. Thus it can truly be said she is our life, our sweetness and our hope! Mary is crowned Queen reigning with the King so let us therefore approach Heaven and come boldly to the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy and find grace to help in time of need.” (Heb 4:16).

Brian Mizzoni