

FIFTH SUNDAY OF EASTER, 2026

The Lord Jesus spoke the words of today's Gospel reading (John 14: 1-12) at the Thursday night Supper before His Passion. The Gospels of Matthew, Mark, and Luke, as well as St. Paul in I Corinthians, all describe how, at this Supper, the Lord Jesus took the bread, blessed and broke it, and said "Take and eat this, all of you, for this is My Body, which will be given up for you." Then He took the chalice of wine and said, "Take and drink this, all of you, for this is My Blood of the Covenant, which will be shed for you and for many for the forgiveness of sin." Then Jesus added, "Do this in memory of Me." Thus, the Lord Jesus instituted the Sacrament of His Body and Blood, of which this Sunday's First Communicants will fully partake for the first time.

"Let not your hearts be troubled." (John 14:1) Jesus knew that the very next day He would die, and He knew that, confronted by His death, the Disciples would be discouraged, to put it mildly. He knew that His death would not be the end of His story, and so He encouraged them not to give up in the face of what seems like defeat. "You have Faith in God; have Faith also in me." (John 14:1) Our situation in life is surely different from that of the Disciples, but it is certain that we will sometimes face defeat. No one is always a winner. In this passage He assures us that, with His help, we will be winners at the end of the fight. Part of the meaning of Holy Communion is that it is a pledge of victory, an assurance that, when the dust of this life settles, we will still be standing

"In My Father's House there are many rooms," says the Lord Jesus (John 14:2). Now, in John 2:16, Jesus called the Jerusalem Temple His Father's House, but in this passage He is talking about the Temple of Heaven, of which the Jerusalem Temple was only a passing symbol. The Heavenly Temple, that is, life with God, is eternal, powerful, and wonderful beyond our imagining. In that Temple, the Angels and Saints forever offer God perfect worship through the Lamb of God, perfect worship described in Hebrews 12 and in Revelation 4-5.

Just as the Jerusalem Temple had rooms for its priests, so the Heavenly Temple has rooms for all of its priests. In today's second reading, from St. Peter's First Epistle, we read "You are a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people of His own." (1 Peter 2: 9) To be Baptized into Christ Jesus is to share in His Priesthood. We ordained Elders (Presbyters) share in Jesus' Priesthood in a particular way, but all of you share in His Priesthood.

The worship of Heaven is made present on earth during the Holy Mass. During Holy Mass, God's priestly people, lead by an Elder (Presbyter), a man ordained to pray in the very Person of Christ the Head of the Church, participate by Faith in the very worship of Heaven. Anyone who is baptized can participate in this Sacrifice of praise, but full participation involves receiving Holy Communion, open to those who are properly prepared for the Sacrament, fully accept the solemn, public teachings of the Catholic Church, and are making a good faith effort to live according to those teachings. Part of the meaning of Holy Communion is that it is full participation on earth in the worship of Heaven itself. As the Second Vatican Council stated, God's People are to have full, conscious and active participation in this truly heavenly worship. I will add, with the weight of many saints behind me, that they are to participate in this worship in a way that shows how sacred the Holy Mass truly is. This applies to their clothes, their posture, and their attitude. For their part, Presiding Presbyters, priests celebrating Holy Mass, absolutely must do their best to show that the Mass on earth is a representation of the worship of Heaven. Not too long ago, good people told me, as though it were a funny story, about a priest, once

upon a time, who was careful to pray the Mass quickly so he could be on time for golf. Those good people thought it was a funny story. It made me want to cry. Hopefully without realizing it, that priest had indicated that Holy Mass was a lower priority than a good golf game. In fact, short of matters of life and death, Holy Mass, as a participation in the worship of Heaven, as the living Memorial of Jesus' Passion and Death, and as the living pledge of Resurrection with Jesus, has priority over everything else. Holy Communion, received for the first time this Sunday by some children of our parish, is the one of the most important things people can possibly be part of this side of Heaven. Another part of the meaning of Holy Communion is simply and awesomely that it is how we begin to share in the eternal Life of the incarnate Son of God, our Lord Jesus Christ. In His words, used for the Gospel at the Funerals of both of my parents, "He who eats My Flesh and drinks My Blood has Eternal Life, and I will raise Him up on the last day." (John 6:54)

This Sunday is also commitment Sunday for the annual diocesan campaign "Living and Giving in Christ: Unity Through Diocesan Ministries." This is quite different from the recently concluded capital campaign, the first one in 25 years and probably the last one for 25 years, which successfully sought five year pledges for major building and infrastructure projects in the Diocese and its parishes, including ours. The annual diocesan campaign is something different. It is about sustaining the operations of regular diocesan ministries. What the Sunday collection is to the parish, the annual appeal is to the diocese. The Sunday collection pays the salaries of the priest and parish staff, pays the utilities, and pays the insurance - that sort of thing. Similarly, the annual diocesan appeal pays the salaries of the bishop and the diocesan staff, and pays the insurance and utilities for diocesan facilities.

Every Catholic should contribute to the ordinary operations of both the parish and the diocese, making an offering to the Sunday collections and to the diocesan appeal. Clearly, some can contribute more and some less. How much should they contribute? Well, this obviously varies according to personal circumstances. People who are wealthy should recall that God is the ultimate source of all their wealth, which is given to them not only for their private benefit but also for the common good. Accordingly, wealthy people should consider giving a full tithe, or 10 percent of their gross income, to the parish, the diocese, and various charities. People who are poor couldn't do that, but, recalling the Lord Jesus' story of the poor widow whose few small coins were more valuable to the Lord than the greater contributions of the much wealthier, should give something. I, being neither rich nor poor, give a tithe on the net total of my ordinary income. My pledge to Communion for Mission is separate, taken from the inheritance from my father and an aunt. My ordinary giving to parish, diocese, and charities is from 10% of my total ordinary post tax income, counting salary and other compensation. Thus, 5% of my net ordinary income goes to the parish, and 1.67 percent each to the diocesan appeal, other Church appeals, and non Church appeals.

Well, I do have some nerd in me, I reckon; but that does work for me, as being both fairly generous and quite affordable. Find a way of giving that works for you, as being both generous and affordable.

More importantly, participate well in the Holy Mass always and, whenever possible, receive Holy Communion at Mass. Receive Holy Communion as Jesus' personal promise to you of Eternal Life: "He who eats this bread, shall live forever." (John 6:59)