

WHAT'S THE DEAL ??

A CATECHESIS SERIES ON BASICS OF PARISH LIFE AND CULTURE



Everything you ever wanted to know about quirks of Catholic life but were too afraid to ask.



BASICS FOR KEEPING SUNDAY HOLY

What does it mean to keep holy the sabbath... to take this as a “day of rest”? To begin with we need to understand what kind of “rest” we’re talking about. The rest of Sunday is described by the Church, very specifically, as *requies*... the same “rest” we enjoy in heaven. This translates into a couple of concepts we’ll explore this week: (1)

The value of silence as a prerequisite for worship. (2) keeping ourselves recollected throughout the week as a preparation for Sunday. (3) For whom are we praying on Sunday. (4) Family prayer through the week as a build up to Sunday. (5) Decorum in Church. (6) Dressing for Church. (7) How do mom and dad manage kids in Church?

One topic for each day of the week... all of them submitted by parishioners to their priests for answers. We hope you find them useful and edifying.

In response to multiple requests for explanations, reminders etc. about basics of parish life throughout the Easter season we’ll be publishing a series of reflections to keep us all refreshed on why we do what we do. Look for this newsletter in the back of Church each week. Questions are always welcome. Feel free to contact Fr. De Rosa.



AFTER THE FIRE CAME A LIGHT SILENT SOUND (I KINGS 19:12)

George Gershwin's 'American in Paris' is famed for, among other things, its ability to use musical instruments to evoke the hustle and bustle of a modern city. A cacophony of noise synchronizes into harmony. Wouldn't it be nice if real cities were like that? Sensory perception is the hallmark of worldly living. We see, hear, touch, and taste our world. What has always set sacred space apart is silence. Whether in our homes or in our churches, silence pushes the world out for a little while in order to let God in. It is the silence

that distinguishes these spaces from the 'world' outside. Silence fosters the receptivity prerequisite to being loved by the Father. Only after first having received and contemplated that love are we well-disposed to make an active response in word, song, or action. In the quote above, the prophet Elijah hears the voice of God not in an earthquake or in raging fire, but in a "light silent sound"... sometimes translated "a quiet breeze."

Taking even 20 minutes of silence each day... before the kids wake up...

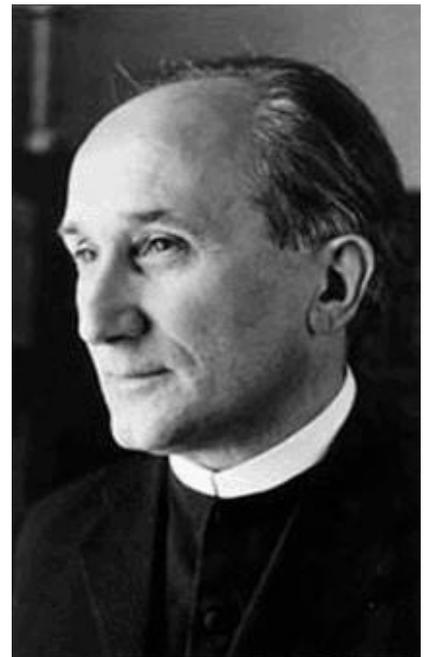
or after they've gone to bed... can change your inner life in ways you'd never imagine. Turn off the cell phone, the iPod etc., so you can turn on the voice of your Father within you. It'll be intimidating at first, a jumble of inner echoes as the noise dies down, but eventually you'll know yourself better and learn to know the voice of the Father loving you and directing you toward a more perfect earthly life and ultimately toward the 'rest' of heaven itself.

"The talker does not yet possess genuine truth, which comes into being only when the essence of an object, the significance of a relation and what is valid and eternal in this world reveal themselves. This requires the spaciousness, freedom, and pure receptiveness of that inner 'clean swept room' which silence alone can create. The constant talker knows no such room in himself; hence he cannot know truth. Truth, and consequently the reality of speech, depends upon the speaker's ability to speak and be silent in turn."

From
Meditations Before Mass, Romano Guardini. Sophia Institute Press (2013) (available on amazon.com)

RECOMMENDED READING: "MEDITATIONS BEFORE MASS"

Rev. Romano Guardini was an intellectual father to the Second Vatican Council. His major areas of enquiry included the nature of man as a being of worship.



THAT MY SACRIFICE AND YOURS

“He who bears the daily trials sent to him by God does no small thing.” -Rev. Frederick William Faber, CO



On entering the People of God through faith and Baptism, one receives a share in this people's unique, *priestly* vocation: "Christ the Lord, high priest taken from among men, has made this new people 'a kingdom of priests to God, his Father.' The baptized, by regeneration and the anointing of the Holy Spirit, are *consecrated* to be a spiritual house and a holy priesthood." (Catechism, 784)

“What’s my sacrifice?”
-St. Peter’s School 8th-grader

When the Sabbath is cut off from the rest of the week, a thing ‘tacked-on,’ a ‘box to be checked,’ it becomes manifestly unattractive... just one more thing to do. But our Catholic tradition has a much richer understanding of Sunday. When an 8th-grader asked me “What’s my sacrifice?” I told him, “Monday-Saturday.” And it’s true. Everything we do Monday-Saturday is what we present to the Lord on Sunday.

Our week is our priestly sacrifice. The clergy’s job is, through the sacred rites, to join our imperfect sacrifices to the one perfect sacrifice of Jesus on the cross so that the Father will look kindly upon them. This has a double effect. On the one hand it wins graces from the Father for the people we’re praying for. On the other, it fills our challenges, pains, sufferings etc. throughout the week with a divine meaning... as each one of them, like the cross of Jesus, becomes the

instrument through which we win supernatural graces/aides for ourselves and our neighbors.

This Sunday in the quiet time as the gifts are being presented and blessed by the priest, consider all you’ve done Mon.-Sat. and imagine yourself heaping it all upon the altar with the body of Jesus being offered to the Father. *That’s* your sacrifice as a member of God’s priestly people... and it’s wonderful.

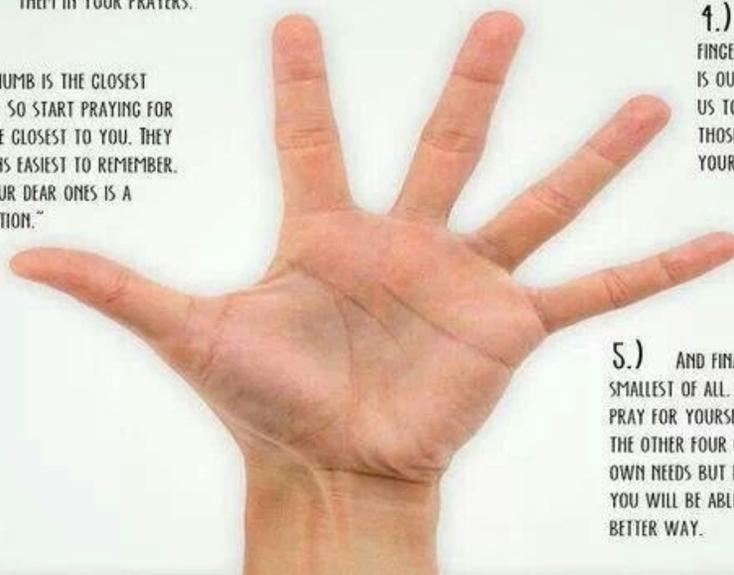
POPE FRANCIS' FIVE FINGER PRAYER

2.) THE NEXT FINGER IS THE INDEX. PRAY FOR THOSE WHO TEACH YOU, INSTRUCT YOU AND HEAL YOU. THEY NEED THE SUPPORT AND WISDOM TO SHOW DIRECTION TO OTHERS. ALWAYS KEEP THEM IN YOUR PRAYERS.

3.) THE FOLLOWING FINGER IS THE TALLEST. IT REMINDS US OF OUR LEADERS, THE GOVERNORS AND THOSE WHO HAVE AUTHORITY. THEY NEED GOD'S GUIDANCE.

4.) THE FOURTH FINGER IS THE RING FINGER. EVEN THAT IT MAY SURPRISE YOU, IT IS OUR WEAKEST FINGER. IT SHOULD REMIND US TO PRAY FOR THE WEAKEST, THE SICK OR THOSE PLACUED BY PROBLEMS. THEY NEED YOUR PRAYERS.

1.) THE THUMB IS THE CLOSEST FINGER TO YOU. SO START PRAYING FOR THOSE WHO ARE CLOSEST TO YOU. THEY ARE THE PERSONS EASIEST TO REMEMBER. TO PRAY FOR OUR DEAR ONES IS A "SWEET OBLIGATION."



5.) AND FINALLY WE HAVE OUR SMALLEST FINGER, THE SMALLEST OF ALL. YOUR PINKIE SHOULD REMIND YOU TO PRAY FOR YOURSELF. WHEN YOU ARE DONE PRAYING FOR THE OTHER FOUR GROUPS, YOU WILL BE ABLE TO SEE YOUR OWN NEEDS BUT IN THE PROPER PERSPECTIVE, AND ALSO YOU WILL BE ABLE TO PRAY FOR YOUR OWN NEEDS IN A BETTER WAY.

Just as important as for whom we pray is with whom we pray

It won't come as a surprise to parishioners: I'm not God... and neither are any of you. In addition, none of us is [yet] in heaven. To win favor in the heavenly court... or at least to feel more comfortable approaching the Father it's good to pray with the saints for others. To use a DC image: praying with the saints is like being best friend's with the personal assistant to a cabinet secretary or president... You certainly have a right to talk with the boss, but you're much more likely to get the

appointment and be confident going in if the way has been paved by a good friend who understands where you're coming from. The most powerful friend we have is our Mother, Mary. Try learning this prayer by heart:

Remember, O most gracious Virgin Mary, that never was it known that anyone who fled to your protection, implored your help, or sought your intercession, was left unaided. Inspired by this confidence, I fly unto you, O Virgin of virgins, my Mother. To you do I come, before you I stand, sinful and sorrowful. O Mother of the Word Incarnate, despise not my petitions, but in your mercy, hear and answer me. Amen.

Always Pray for the Pope

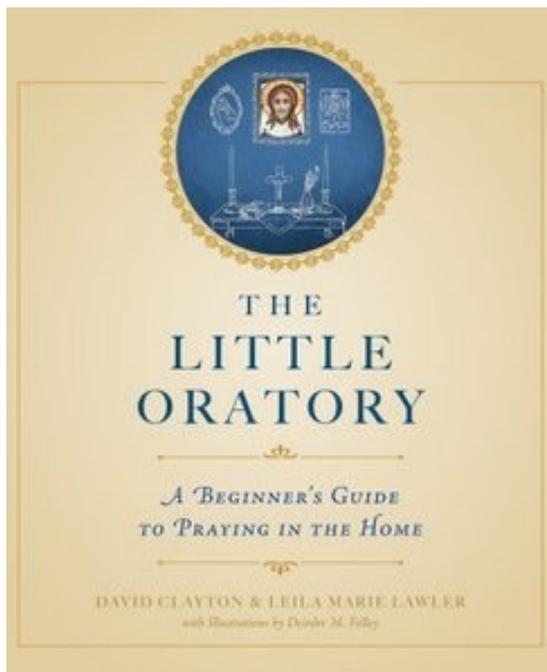
O God, the Pastor and Ruler of all the faithful, look down, in your mercy, upon your servant, N., whom you have appointed to preside over your Church; and grant, we beseech you, that both by word and example, he may edify all those under his charge; so that, with the flock entrusted to him, he may arrive at length unto life everlasting. Through Christ our Lord. -Amen.



HOW SHALL WE PRAY?

Father, my folks never prayed with us. Where do we begin?
-St. Peter's parishioner after Sunday mass.

If you're like the parishioner quoted above, or like me for that matter, you probably grew up without an active family prayer life... not just grace at meals, but real prayer on a regular basis. You might have a shadowy recollection of a religion teacher at Sunday school saying, "You don't need formal prayer, just talk with God." While it's true that *formal* prayers are not the limit of prayer, ALL the saints we revere had formal prayer as a bedrock of their lives. That said, it can be intimidating starting from scratch. The book below (available on [amazon.com](https://www.amazon.com)) is a great starting point for a couple or a family with kids who want to begin building a culture of prayer in the home. [Clayton and Lawler, *The Little Oratory: a Beginner's Guide to Praying in the Home*. Sophia Institute Press. (2014)]



The Rosary... when in doubt always turn to the Rosary.

- 1 Make the Sign of the Cross.
- 2 Holding the Crucifix, say the *Apostles' Creed*.
- 3 On the first bead, say an *Our Father*.
- 4 Say three *Hail Marys* on each of the next three beads.
- 5 Say the *Glory Be*
- 6 For each of the five decades, announce the Mystery (perhaps followed by a brief reading from Scripture) then say the *Our Father*.
- 7 While fingering each of the ten beads of the decade, next say ten *Hail Marys* while meditating on the Mystery. Then say a *Glory Be*.
- 8 *After saying the five decades, say the Hail, Holy Queen follow by:*
V. *Pray for us, O holy Mother of God.*
R. *That we may be made worthy of the promises of Christ.*

Let us pray: O God, whose Only Begotten Son, by his life, Death, and Resurrection, has purchased for us the rewards of eternal life, grant, we beseech thee, that while meditating on these mysteries of the most holy Rosary of the Blessed Virgin Mary, we may imitate what they contain and obtain what they promise, through the same Christ our Lord. Amen.

PIETY WITHOUT PIETISM ON SUNDAY

Does our bodily posture affect the way we pray? Should we stand, sit, or kneel while we pray?

This is a question few of us ponder, but is one of the most important aspects of prayer. It may not appear to be much of an issue, but that is only because we have believed the fallacy that we are only “spiritual beings” and what we do with our bodies does not affect our soul. In truth, what we do with our body *does* have a direct impact upon our soul. This unity of body and soul allows all of our senses to be engaged in prayer (sight, hearing, taste, sound, touch) and assists our soul in being raised up to God. The *Catechism* reinforces this fundamental truth and teaches us that prayer involves our whole being: “Whether prayer is expressed in words or gestures, it is the whole man who prays” (paragraph 2562). On account of this unity, the Church’s public forms of worship contain numerous elements that are visible and engage our bodily senses. The *Catechism* further explains: “In human life, signs and symbols occupy an important place. As a being at once body and spirit, man expresses and perceives spiritual realities through physical signs and symbols. As a social being, man needs signs and symbols to communicate with others, through language, gestures, and actions. The same holds true for his relationship with God” (1146). As we can see, the Catholic Church does not have “empty rituals.” Each and every exterior act has a specific meaning and purpose that is designed to lead us to the worship of our Creator. The Church has “full rituals” that fill a

person’s soul to the brim. We need these signs, symbols and gestures to help us pray; it corresponds to the core of our being. Thomas Aquinas solidifies this idea when he writes that a man performs such works as “prostrations, genuflections, vocal utterances, and hymns...so that our attention may be directed to God by these sensible deeds and that our love may be aroused” (*Summa Contra Gentiles III*, ch. 119.). Cardinal Ratzinger (Benedict XVI) further solidifies this reality and proclaims: “[O]ur religion, our prayer, demands bodily expression. Because the Lord, the Risen One, gives himself in the Body, we have to respond in soul and body....all the spiritual possibilities of our body are necessarily included in celebrating the Eucharist: singing, speaking, keeping silence, sitting, standing, kneeling” (Joseph Cardinal Ratzinger, *God Is Near Us: The Eucharist, the Heart of Life*, 91).

(Excerpted from: Kosloski, Philip, Stand Sit Kneel: Does it Matter How You Pray. www.philipkosloski.com/stand-sit-kneel-does-it-matter-how-

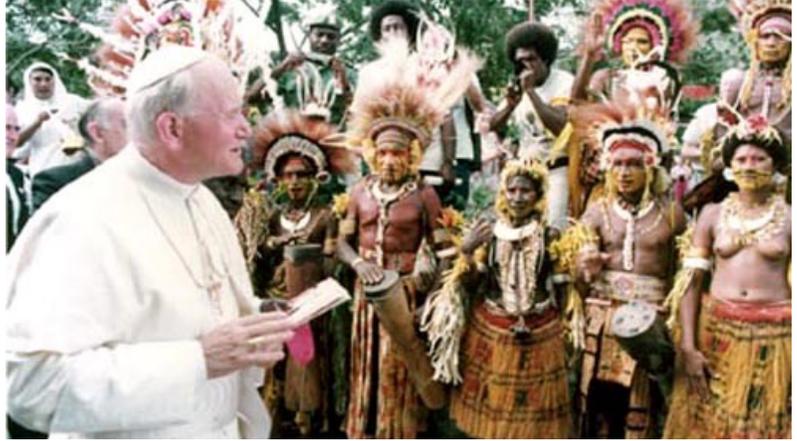


Parishioners in any given parish will often react with shock at different behaviors displayed in church. Sometimes they’re right, sometimes not. Because the family of the Church is so global... and because modern transportation sends all our varied cultures/parish experiences crashing into each other, **it’s hard to proscribe one single “way of behaving in church.”** *However*, **all of our experiences across the entire Catholic world do have certain principles in common.** The excerpt on the left gives a good rundown of some of the ideas we all ought to keep in mind when in church. If we do this, then all our behaviors will be filled with piety, that virtue by which we render to God what he is due. This differs from *pietism* which is a vice that makes a caricature out of what stereotypical acts of piety look like... doing so to draw attention to oneself instead of to God. **Whatever** particular manifestations it takes, our goal on Sunday is always piety, never pietism.

HOLY vs. HOLE-Y??

As a general principle: In church everything we do, say, and yes... what we wear should communicate what we are about on Sunday.

A common question from parishioners of all backgrounds: "Father, what should we wear to church?" As the photos indicate, our globetrotting Pope St. John Paul the Great encountered and prayed with people in many and varied circumstances. Cultures vary, styles change... Add to this the fact that the Church is a home to EVERYONE: rich, poor, young, less young... and the fact that in Washington we say mass in over a dozen languages every Sunday... There's no uniformity of uniforms in church. However, just as with our decorum, there are general principles that can guide us when dressing for Sunday mass.



* Sunday is the Lord's Day. It's also a day for us as a church community (vs. individuals) so our clothing should not bring excessive attention to ourselves or our physical attributes.

* Mass is the greatest thing humans can do - what we wear should communicate that we put some thought into our choices. Clothing that communicates, "I just threw this on." doesn't live up to that ideal.

* Mass is not about rich or poor, but about total self-donation. So the homeless person in tatters, the young adult in their best dress jeans, the experienced professional in

suit and tie are all equally well-dressed for mass if they are communicating that they've given their all in presenting themselves to the Lord of lords.

* Out of consideration for the wider community we should all desire to balance our own cultural expressions (whether based on ethnicity, age, geography, whatever...) with the general culture in which we find ourselves. This balance will shift from place to place... and there's no one black and white rule to determine it, but all of us can work at keeping the balance in good faith for each other's sake.





TWO PERSPECTIVES ON MANAGING KIDS AT MASS

A friend of mine in a previous parish was once asked at the men's group, "Your folks had 12 kids... how'd the manage you all in church?" His response amazed me. "Mom and dad made it clear to us from as early as we could remember that Sunday was their time to renew being Mr. and Mrs. They sat next to each other, hand-in-hand, and God help you if you interrupted that on Sunday!" My friend - let's call him "Bob" - received a great lesson from his parents. He knew that they couldn't be good parents if they weren't first good married people. That lesson helped older siblings to manage younger ones... and for all

to, generally, behave. And while, I'm sure, Bob's folks didn't have it easy EVERY week, it was a substantial enough lesson that this is what he remembered many years later raising his own (much smaller) family.

Parishioners will often ask about "cry-procedures." We are blessed to have a parish full of new life. Indeed, it should be the goal of every Catholic parish to have members from across the life-spectrum at every mass. The young inspire and give new life. The less-young inspire and give wisdom for the living. Babies, fuss and cry... it's what they do. After several million

years of evolution, this shouldn't surprise us. Your child is NEVER a distraction to the priest. A thought for parishioners: [soon-to-be] Saint Theresa of Calcutta, during the "silent" holy hour every day in the Calcutta convent chapel, would leave the windows open to the noise and stench of the most crowded impoverished city in India. She did so on purpose... she wanted her nuns to remember who they were praying for. We can likewise open our ears and our hearts to the new life around us offering our prayer, patience and sacrifices for them that they might one day grow to proclaim Christ in all they do.

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