

Homily 5th Sunday after Easter

Cor Jesu Oratory

17 May 2009

1. “Declare it with the voice of joy, and make this to be heard, alleluia: speak it out even to the ends of the earth: The Lord hath delivered His people, alleluia.” These words of the Introit of our Mass today express the Church’s faith during this Easter Season, a joy that no evil, no human being, no tragedy, no circumstance can alter. We live this reality by being immersed in the death of the Lord and rise with Him through our Baptismal consecration, our communion with Him in the Eucharistic Mystery, our daily struggle against evil and death through living a dedication to His Person by our love for Him and for our neighbor. The Scriptural texts in the Liturgy today direct us to live this faith in a life of hearing and keeping the Word of God, “unspotted from this world” and trust and surrender to our heavenly Father in prayer.

2. I welcome all of you to the Open House for “Cor Jesu Oratory” and the future “Cor Jesu Priory” of the Nazareth Community that is the center for the Institute of Saint Joseph. This is a day of great rejoicing for our religious community and association. Fr. Felix is unable to be with us for our Mass this morning but will join us at noon and for the afternoon. In his name I welcome you and thank you for your interest, support and love. I want to thank especially those who have come from long distances to be with us today. This day is the culmination of many years of waiting upon the Lord, discernment, prayer and work. We want to begin by adoring and thanking the Lord for His wonderful gift to us with “the voice of joy” in the Eucharistic Sacrifice.

3. In our Gospel this morning we hear our Lord instruct us in the art of prayer. “Ask”, He tells us, for by belonging to Him, the Father hears us because we love the Son and believe that He has come from the Father. What was obscure, taught by our Lord in proverbs, became clear to them when the Holy Spirit descended upon them at Pentecost. At the Ascension, which we celebrate next week, the Presence and action of Jesus was transformed from His human, bodily Presence to a Presence mediated by the Church in Her sacraments, Her ministers, and Her teaching. In the Extraordinary Form of the Roman Rite, which we celebrate today, the Paschal Candle is extinguished after the Gospel on Ascension Thursday symbolizing the transition from the Presence of the Risen Lord on earth in the sign of the candle to the mysterious Presence of the Lord in the Eucharist and in His Word. The Temple of His Body was to be present wherever the Sacrifice of the Mass was celebrated and wherever His Eucharistic Body would be reposed in the tabernacle. There was one Temple and one Sacrifice in Jerusalem in the

religion of Israel. But the universal and cosmic Sacrifice, although one because it is Jesus' sacrifice that is re-presented on the altar, is present in the Temple of His Body.

This is the great mystery that we celebrate today in the inauguration of 'Cor Jesu Oratory', here in the former Sacred Heart Church. Ten years ago, the people of this parish were joined with St. Joseph Parish in Boyd, which is just across the highway. The faith of this parish would not allow this Temple of God to be abandoned, however. Holy Mass continued to be offered in the Church and the Eucharistic Presence of our Lord continued to abide here. When the prospect of having a religious community live here to allow the Catholic faith to be expressed here on this property, a faith that goes back to the times of the missionary, Fr. Charles Goldsmith, during the early 1800's, the parish and their pastor, Fr. Robert Nelson, offered this to the Institute of Saint Joseph as a gift. If you visit the cemetery across the road, you will see those who established this parish as well as their heirs to the faith. If you look at the windows, you will see that they are written in German. The founding members of this parish were from different parts of German, Austria, Bohemia and Bavaria, the homeland of our present Holy Father, Pope Benedict XVI. We have a strong heritage upon which to build our monastic and contemplative life; please remember these courageous and faith-filled pioneers today at the Memento of the Dead.

4. The history of this Parish in the many sacrifices and hardships that made possible the place where the Holy Sacrifice could take place with reverence and decorum points to the lesson of our Gospel in the primacy of prayer. This is the very purpose of establishing "Cor Jesu Oratory and Priory". One day, and I hope and pray this is soon, the daily round of the Liturgy of the Hours, or the prayer of the Church seven times each day with the centerpiece of the Holy Mass, will begin. This is contingent on the establishment of our Priory, where the men's community will live, and other housing for our oblate members, our Sister and Father. Every day, seven times a day, we will be interceding before the heavenly Father in the name of His Son for the needs of the Church, for the Holy Father, for our Bishop, the priests and faithful of our Diocese, and for all the intentions of those who ask for our prayers.

But a monastic community is not just about asking, as important as this may be. Recently, Pope Benedict spoke to the Congregation for Institutes of Consecrated Life and the Societies of Apostolic Life about the aim of monastic life as "both simple and essential". He said:

"Prefer nothing to the love of Christ". These words which
the Rule of Saint Benedict takes from the previous tradition

clearly express the precious treasure of monastic life lived still today in both the Christian West and East. It is a pressing invitation to mould monastic life to the point of making it an evangelical memorial of the Church and, when it is authentically lived, “a reference point for all the baptized”(cf. John Paul II, *Oriente lumen*, n. 9)...By virtue of the absolute primacy reserved for Christ, monasteries are called to be places in which room is made for the celebration of God’s glory, where the mysterious but real divine presence in the world is adored and praised, where one seeks to live the new commandment of love and mutual service, thus preparing for the final “revelation of the Sons of God” (Rm 8, 19). When monks live the Gospel radically, when they dedicate themselves to integral contemplative life in profound spousal union with Christ, ... monasticism can constitute for all the forms of religious life and consecrated life a remembrance of what is essential and has primacy in the life of every baptized person: to seek Christ and put nothing before this love.

What our Holy Father expresses in such profound language is the very purpose we are establishing the ‘Cor Jesu Priory’, the very reason the Nazareth Community exists within the Institute of Saint Joseph. The monastic members are to be a sign of “what is essential and has primacy” for the married, single and diocesan priest members of our association. Our one and only duty is to live so as to be ‘doers of the word’ in the words of our Epistle today as strength and encouragement for our members who labor in the midst of the world. The monastic life is meant to be a sign of hope and of the existence of a more transcendent reality for the Church and the world. From this basis, we take the needs, sorrows, joys, and intentions to our celebration of the Divine Office and most especially the Sacrifice of the Mass to place them on the altar.

We offer the Extraordinary Form of the Roman Rite, or Traditional Latin Mass, as it is commonly known, on each Sunday of the year by request of our Bishop for this area of the Diocese of La Crosse. Our monastic community has come to see the importance of rooting ourselves deeply in the tradition of Catholic worship in order to live the contemplative life in continuity with the monastic tradition. We have experienced the enrichment of using both forms of the Roman Rite, the Mass of Pope Paul VI in both English and Latin, and the Mass of St. Gregory the Great, or the Extraordinary Form, which was in universal usage before the Second Vatican Ecumenical Council. Gregorian chant plays an essential role in our worship as a monastic community, as well. This focus expresses what our Holy Father, Pope Benedict XVI, calls “the hermeneutic of continuity.” This means that there was no break, no rupture after the Second Vatican Council from what was taught and practiced before. Rather, what was esteemed as essential and true continues to be so. It is in the integration of the call to renewal, interiorly as well as exteriorly, within the life of a community, which will establish the proper attitudes and expressions of the Catholic Tradition.

I want to call your attention to a few things within our Holy Mass today as a way of explanation. The different rituals and practices of this form highlight aspects of the Mass that do not contradict the Ordinary Form but complement and emphasize things in a particular way. Already we have been through the Introductory Sprinkling Rite, Prayers at the Foot of the Altar and the Mass of the Catechumens, or the Liturgy of the Word. The Prayers at the Foot of the Altar are an ancient practice of preparation for the beginning of Mass. The priest and servers prayed this during the singing of the Introit because originally these prayers were said in the sacristy. The congregation is not being left out; rather, the attitude of prayer and preparation is being symbolized by the prayers being said and the people are to join in. The readings in Latin are sung solemnly in chant in order to show their dignity and the unchangeability of the Word of God. The Eucharistic Prayer, or Roman Canon is a silent prayer. This may be a bit strange to us who are so used to hearing it spoken aloud. But the gestures of the priest are a silent sermon indicating where he is in the prayer as well as the ringing of the bells. The Lord's Prayer is chanted by the priest alone, in the name of the people in his role as mediator and official intercessor. Holy Communion is received kneeling and on the tongue. In this rite, the priest alone says "Amen." The communicant merely tilts back the head and opens the mouth to receive the Sacred Host. The final Gospel from Saint John is said silently by the priest because this, also, is of ancient origin, and was said as a "thanksgiving after Communion". It is a time for all to join in this "thanksgiving" where we commemorate the Word made flesh; the same Word received in Holy Communion.

5. These next three days before the traditional celebration of Ascension Thursday have been set aside in the Extraordinary Form as what are known as "Rogation Days". In the Gospel today the Latin for "I will ask the Father for you" is "ego rogabo Patrem da vobis" which refers to our Lord's prayer, or asking for us before the Father. These days were set aside as a special time for a procession invoking the Saints and particular intentions against, wars, calamity, violent storms and other evils as well as for a good growing season. The Holy Mass then follows imploring God's mercy and blessing. Penitential violet is worn even though it is the Easter Season. This observance reminds us that we must take special efforts to ask God's forgiveness for not only our own sins but the sins of the world and to ask for protection from evil and for blessing upon our labors.

It is imperative that in these days, during this time of history, we make reparation and pray for the conversion of those who deliberately seek to impose the 'culture of death' upon society at large. It would be a great gift to the world if we would spend these days praying the Rosary, attending Mass if this is possible, making a Holy Hour or doing some kind of penance for our country and our leaders in government.

Today I offer this Mass in Reparation for the sins against human life, most particularly the sin of direct abortion which has taken the lives of millions, the evil practice of embryonic stem-cell research, the attack upon the most weak and vulnerable of our society: the handicapped, elderly and infirm, through the acceptance and promotion of

mercy killing, and in particular for the grave offence against God by leaders of Notre Dame University in presenting an honorary doctorate to our President, an aggressive proponent of the culture of death. We are in a grave situation that only prayer and penance can remedy. There is need for action, but without the support and foundation of solid spiritual power, these cannot be sustained. May our Lord have mercy on us and on the whole world for the grievous attacks on human life and the lack of proper teaching and formation in our Catholic faith that has allowed this to happen over these past fifty years. We must take heed of the words of Saint James in our Epistle today: “Religion clean and undefiled before God and the Father is this: To visit the fatherless and widows in their tribulation, and to keep one’s self unspotted from this world.” The most vulnerable at the time this was written were the widows and orphans. The unborn and the helpless are the widows and orphans of our own day. We will be judged severely for our lack of care and compassion for these, ‘the least of our brothers and sisters.’

6. We can rejoice in the words of our Offertory verse today: “Blessed be the Lord, Who hath not turned away my prayer, not His mercy from me, alleluia.” We know that the Father loves us and that if we love His Son, if we abide with Him, our prayers will be heard. Although we suffer in this vale of tears, although we may be entering into a very difficult period of our history, more difficult than any financial or economic crisis, a time when we will be called upon to witness to Christ and the Church as our brothers and sisters in various countries at various times have done with great courage and resolve in the face of evil and of persecution, we rejoice in the Lord, for He has brought us salvation.

With the prayers of the Holy Mother of God, Saint Joseph our Patron and Father, Saint Michael and all the angels and saints, may we enter into this Eucharistic Liturgy with greater faith, hope and love. In the words of our Communion Prayer: “Filled with strength from this heavenly Table, May we both desire what is right, and obtain what we desire.”

Today we will take up a free will offering at the Offertory for the care and upkeep of the “Cor Jesu Oratory”. We thank you for your generosity and hope that you will return to worship here with us.