

Catholic 101 – September, 2010

Explanation Line (to be used each week as an intro)

Have you ever wondered ‘Why do we Catholics do that?’ In an effort to help us all know and celebrate what makes us uniquely Catholic, an information piece will be posted weekly about our faith, prayers, practices, and traditions. Hopefully your questions will be answered throughout the year. If not, send in your questions to radams@stpatselkhorn.org.

Sept 5:

Sign of the Cross

Though not directly used in the Scriptures, the Sign of the Cross has been part of our faith since the early Church as a way of claiming oneself for Christ. St. Basil noted its use from the time of the apostles, particularly for baptisms. The sign of the cross, with or without words, is layered with meaning. The simple action confers multiple messages of faith including...

- A profession of faith – professing belief in the Trinity, like a mini-creed;
- A renewal of baptism – recalling being signed during the sacrament and linking you to the Body of Christ in the Church;
- A mark of discipleship – declaring your commitment to being a follower of Christ;
- A recognition of suffering – Christ suffered and gave His life for us, we accept suffering to share in His cross and call on Him in times of need;
- A declaration against evil and temptation – signing puts up a defense against evil and temptations while calling on God to strengthen us.

Resource: “Significance of the Sign of the Cross” with Bert Ghezzi on www.catholic.org

Sept 12:

Crucifix/Cross

We read references to the cross of Christ throughout the New Testament. The cross became a common symbol of Christianity in the fourth century after the faith became legalized. The crucifix, a cross with the image of the dying Christ on it, started to appear in art and devotion in the fifth century. The crucifix reminds us of Jesus’ death and resurrection. It is a sign of the cost of our salvation and a symbol of Christian hope. The Conference of Catholic Bishops issued the guideline that every Catholic Church have a crucifix on or near the altar clearly visible to the congregation. Find a short video on the history of the crucifix on www.mycatholicvoice.com. Search for “history of the crucifix.”

Resources: Since You Asked Topic: Crucifix on www.disciplesnow.com & *Built of Living Stones: Art, Architecture and Worship*

Sept 19:

Parts of the Church

Church with a capital “C” refers to the *living* temple, us as the People of God! You are an important part of the Church! This segment, however, explores the lower “c” church, the building created for the liturgical prayer of the parish community. When you walk into the church, you enter the *Narthex*, the entrance of the building, a place of welcome that enables the faithful to transition from everyday life into the liturgical celebration. At the close of mass to return to the world nourished and ready to live the faith. The main body of the church is the *Nave*. The nave is the congregation’s area where the

people of God enter into full participation in the liturgy. The *Sanctuary* is the main focal point of the church containing the altar, ambo and chair. The priest, deacon and other ministers exercise their offices in the sanctuary. It is to be distinct in design and elevation. The *Altar* is the table on which the sacrificial meal takes place when Christ becomes truly present in the consecrated Body and Blood. Altars are to be made of natural stone reflecting the nobility and strength of the One it reflects. The place from which the Scriptures are proclaimed is the *Ambo*. It is the table where Christ becomes present in His Word. The presider's *Chair* signifies the dignity of the priest who leads the community in the person of Christ in the place of the Bishop. The *Eucharistic Chapel* sits separate from the nave and sanctuary. It is a sacred space for the Blessed Sacrament to be held on reserve in the tabernacle. The *Baptistry* is the part of the church that holds the baptismal font. Its location reflects the Christian's journey through the waters of baptism to the altar of sacrifice.

Built of Living Stones: Art, Architecture and Worship and Dictionary of the Liturgy.

Sept 26:

Inaudible Prayers at the Altar

What does the priest say when he adds the water to the wine? What about when he washes his hands? In ancient times, wine was regularly tempered with water. As time progressed, this practice took on a more mystical interpretation symbolizing the intermixing of Jesus' divine and human natures. It also can be seen as the union between Christ and the Church. Preparing the chalice is a function of the deacon. Thus the deacon (or the priest when no deacon is present) prays, "By the mystery of this water and wine may we come to share in the divinity of Christ, who humbled himself to share in our humanity." The prayer prayed during the washing of the priest's hands is "Lord, wash away my iniquity; cleanse me from my sin." This action and prayer expresses the priest's desire for inner purity as part of his personal preparation before offering the Eucharistic sacrifice. In the early church, the gesture also had the practical purpose of cleaning off any dirt or impurities since gifts of poultry, fish or other goods were offered in addition to the bread and wine. Both of these prayers are prayed in an inaudible voice as prescribed in the Sacramentary.

Introduction to the Order of the Mass and the Sacramentary.