EVERYTHING OLD IS NEW AGAIN: EMMAUS EXPLORES THE “NEW” MASS

INTRODUCTION

In Advent 2011, the English-speaking Catholic Church will begin to pray a new translation of the Mass. At Notre Dame, there will be a variety of opportunities to learn the rationale underlying the translation as well as the “new” words of the Mass. However, consider what it takes to become an excellent speaker of a language. We really know French or Spanish or Mandarin when we begin to think like someone who speaks this language. We come to live the way of thinking characteristic of that linguistic community. If we want to learn to speak the words of the Mass in such a way that we think like someone who speaks the language of our faith, we will need to do more than learn or become used to the new texts. Rather, we will need to come to pray these texts so that the mysteries of that they present become a part of us.

Of course, life-transforming prayer, whether within the Eucharist or outside of it, takes practice. Over the coming weeks, we will become acquainted with and “practice” the new texts of the Mass through reflection upon the words we pray. But we will also need to meditate more deeply on the virtues that our prayer seeks to cultivate. Remember this about virtue: virtue is, most simply, a disposition to act in a specific way. In order to be a decent quarterback, one will need to cultivate certain dispositions, including the ability to recognize the coverage of opposing defenses, to throw the ball powerfully enough to reach receivers on go routes, and to

PLEASE USE THESE PAGES TO BEGIN YOUR EMMAUS GROUP’S THREE WEEKS OF REFLECTING ON THE NEW MASS TRANSLATIONS.

YOU MAY CHOOSE TO GO THROUGH THIS INTRODUCTION TOGETHER (AND THUS TAKE FOUR WEEKS TO COMPLETE THE SESSIONS) OR YOU MIGHT RATHER AGREE TO EACH READ THIS ON YOUR OWN IN PREPARATION FOR THE NEXT THREE WEEKS OF DISCUSSION AND PRAYER.

OVER THE COMING WEEKS, WE WILL BECOME ACQUAINTED WITH AND “PRACTICE” THE NEW TEXTS OF THE MASS THROUGH REFLECTION UPON THE WORDS WE PRAY. BUT WE WILL ALSO NEED TO MEDITATE MORE DEEPLY ON THE VIRTUES THAT OUR PRAYER SEEKS TO CULTIVATE.
elude a three-hundred pound defensive end within the pocket. When we speak about someone who is an excellent quarterback, we mean a player who has these virtues.

So what about someone who prays the Mass well? Someone who connects his or her celebration of the Eucharist with study, service, or life in the dorm? The Mass itself, if carefully attended, both offers and promotes the virtues necessary for developing a Eucharistic spirituality; in other words, for allowing the Mass to transform all the other parts of our lives. Pope Benedict XVI said, "Christianity's new worship includes and transfigures every aspect of life: 'Whether you eat or drink, or whatever you do, do all to the glory of God' (1 Cor 10:31). Christians, in all their actions, are called to offer true worship to God. Here the intrinsically eucharistic nature of Christian life begins to take shape. There is nothing authentically human - our thoughts and affections, our words and deeds - that does not find in the sacrament of the Eucharist the form it needs to be lived to the full. Worship pleasing to God thus becomes a new way of living our whole life, each particular moment of which is lifted up, since it is lived as part of a relationship with Christ and as an offering to God (Sacramentum caritatis, no. 71).

When the words that we pray in the Mass, the actions that we perform, become an expression of our identity as Christians, we too will participate in this new worship. We will have developed true Eucharistic virtues.

REFLECTION QUESTIONS

1. Return to the phrase in bold font in the second paragraph above. "Remember this about virtue: 'virtue is, most simply, a disposition to act in a specific way.'" Talk about what this means to you.

2. How often do you attend Mass? Do you find it easy to enter into prayer at Mass? Why or why not?

3. Begin to compose a list of "virtues" that you think are necessary for participating fully, consciously, and actively at Mass. Consider why you would include these virtues.

4. Looking over the course of a week, how often do you see your daily life as a student connected to your weekly (or perhaps, daily) participation in the Eucharist?

TRY THIS

1. Begin to attend Mass at a chapel on campus daily, or at least a few times a week. Keep a simple journal of the insights that you come to in the midst of this prayer.

2. At Mass (either Sunday or daily), let a specific phrase or word catch your attention. Repeat this word or phrase silently to yourself throughout the day as a way of recalling yourself to prayer.

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