

the CATHOLIC NAVIGATOR

Aboard St. Peter's Barque with the Catechism Charting Our Course

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Chasing Holiness

Perhaps the greatest example in history of the acceptance of God's will is seen when Mary answers the messenger angel, Gabriel, "...let it be done to me according to your word." (Lk. 1:38) This begins a new age (*not* The New Age!); the "(inauguration of) 'the fullness of time,' the time of the fulfillment of God's promises and preparations." (CCC 484)

Recall God's promises to Abraham of land (Gen. 15), a kingdom (Gen. 17), and that all nations would bless themselves by Abraham's descendants (Gn. 22:18). We see the first promise fulfilled in Moses' story, and the second, in David. But, it is not until Jesus Christ that God fulfills his third promise. He is the one whose name all nations would invoke to bless themselves. And this is possible because one young woman said "yes!" to God.

This "let it be done" is known around the Catholic water cooler as

Mary's "*fiat*". This is a Latin word meaning *let it be*. This *fiat* was possible because she was 'filled with grace,' according to Gabriel's address. Grace is "the *free and undeserved help* that God gives us to respond to his call... a *participation in the life of God*." (CCC 1996-97)

Because of Mary's cooperation with God's grace, she is not only the model of faith and charity (CCC 967), but she is mother to all humanity:

"In a wholly singular way she cooperated by her obedience, faith, hope, and burning charity in the Savior's work of restoring supernatural life to souls. For this reason she is a mother to us in the order of grace." (CCC 968)

We celebrate this most grace filled moment in Mary's life this Tuesday on the Feast of the Annunciation, nine months before Christ's birth.

DEAR FR. THOM,

WHAT IS THE PROPER WAY TO DISPOSE OF PALMS?
OR, ANY BLESSED OBJECT FOR THAT MATTER?
QUESTIONING IN CATHOLIC LAND

Dear Questioning,

More important than focusing on the details, remember to keep in mind the 'why' of the actions. To bless an object is to set it aside as special. There are two types of blessings for objects. The first type of blessing (*constitutive*) makes the object sacred for use in worship (e.g. a chalice). The second type of blessing (*invocative*) leaves the object with its own character (e.g. rosaries, palm leaves). (*Code of Canon Law 1170-71*)

Because both blessings govern objects used in the service of God, they are generally disposed of when their time comes by burning or burying. Many churches will even take your old palms and burn them for you so as to use them at your next Ash Wednesday service. If not, you can do this yourself... but be careful! Use a can and then return the ashes to the ground.

Most other blessed items are usually buried because they either don't burn or are very difficult to burn. Again, the important thing to remember is that, since these objects were used in service to God, there is a certain respect we attach that determines how we treat them at their end.

Fr. Thom

SAINTS PRESERVE US!

Sainthood can be a contagious thing, passed on like a virus from one person to the next. A case in point is Saint Toribio Alfonso Mogrovejo, Archbishop of Lima, Peru who died on March 23, 1606 and was canonized in 1726. In his lifetime he baptized and confirmed over 500,000 people as he trekked his 170,000 square mile diocese, mostly on foot and quite often alone! Among those he brought into the faith were St. Rose of Lima and St. Martin de Porres. He was also an inspiration to St. Francis Solano and St. John Mancias. How many more countless thousands were touched by his loving ministry and are numbered among the heavenly elect, especially from among the indigenous peoples whom he actively protected from colonial exploitation.

St. Toribio labored for only 23 years in the New World. The first 43 years of his life were spent in his native Spain where he earned fame as a brilliant professor of law at the University of Salamanca. He thus gained the attention of Philip II who appointed him as Grand Inquisitor of Spain even though he was a layman. He undertook this post with such pious fervor that Philip II proposed him for the position of Archbishop of Lima, Peru so as to assure that the New World would be Catholic. Even though Toribio resisted the appointment as contrary to canon law, relenting eventually, he was ordained a priest, consecrated bishop, and then sent to Peru. Thus this layman became the apostle to Peru and a saint to the saints!

What's In A Word?

Scrutiny is “the act of carefully examining something in a prolonged and intense way.” If that ‘something’ is yourself, then the term becomes self-scrutiny, the theme of the third through fifth Sundays of Lent. This fits in especially well with next week’s readings, all of which deal with ‘seeing.’

In most parishes there is a ceremony associated with the Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults (RCIA). Those unbaptized adults (*catechumens*) preparing to enter the Church --and ‘elected’ on the First Sunday of Lent to be baptized at the Easter Vigil Liturgy-- are called forward with their sponsors to the foot of the altar on these three Sundays. Each time they are urged to self-examination, repentance for sin, and conversion. After this, there follows several prayers of intercession for these elect, concluding with a prayer of exorcism, and then dismissal. It should also be noted that because the majority of people entering the Catholic



CATECHETICAL CORNER

Much is said in the readings today about nourishment: water, living water, food that is ‘doing the will of God,’ the harvest, ‘gathering crops for eternal life,’ etc. We heard that God made water available to the Israelites. In other readings we discovered that God also made food available to his children in the desert. His job is to provide. Our job is to trust.

When the Israelites were hungry, God rained down “*manna*.” This word ‘*manna*’ literally means, “What is this?” The people did not know what this food was, nor understand how it nourished. We too do not completely understand the living bread that Jesus Christ left to us that feeds our eternal bodies.

When the bread and wine are consecrated during the Mass, they become the body and blood of Jesus in a real way. While the physical properties of the bread and wine do not change, its substance does. This change is known as *transubstantiation*. (CCC 1376) “Substance” is one of those words that philosophers use to point to what is essential to something. Any more of a description than this, though, is above my pay grade, I’m afraid.

What is important to know is that Jesus’ body and blood does the same for our immortal bodies that manna did for the Israelites’ physical bodies: feeds, sustains, and gives life! Jesus, the living bread, is necessary for the transformation of our mortal bodies into whatever eternal life requires. The host is not merely a symbol. It is a concrete way that we are nourished while we travel this desert on our way home to God. It is truly Jesus’ real presence, “his Body and his Blood, with his soul and his divinity.” (CCC 1413)

Fortunately, our understanding is not required for it to ‘work.’ And, is it really that hard to believe that God who created all out of nothing and gave us beauty and truth couldn’t come up with a way for the Word, Jesus Christ, to feed our immortal bodies?

Church have already been validly baptized in a Christian denomination, these ‘*candidates*’ do not join the catechumens in the *scrutinies*.

For us remaining in our pews after the catechumens’ and candidates’ dismissal—surely the *scrutinies* are for us as well. Have we grown in the knowledge and practice of our Faith? Have we removed our obstacles to God? Short of this, have we regularly taken advantage of the grace of sacramental Reconciliation, aware that we can make an accounting of our venial sins absent any serious sin? The Catechism notes this about venial sin: “Deliberate and unrepented venial sin disposes us little by little to commit mortal sin.” (CCC 1863) While venial sin can be forgiven by other means, the Sacrament of Reconciliation is recommended for the guidance of the confessor as well as the strengthening grace of the sacrament. And by all means, scrutiny, or a daily examination of conscience is most beneficial for our spiritual health and growth.

SCRIPTURAL SECRETS...

The established British custom of High Tea presents an image of refinement: well dressed people seated around a table sipping from bone china cups, pinky fingers extended, and nibbling cucumber sandwiches and small pastries while quietly conversing in perfect English. Cool elegance and strict reserve governed the behavior of the privileged class that set the standards for Victorian decorum... and for many a BBC TV series. Such a scene set me to thinking about the decorum urged by Jesus on those who would partake of the Eucharist. First, of course, is the matter of taking quite literally the fact that Jesus is offering himself as food and drink and that this is essential to our eternal life. The Gospel of John lays out the harshness of this demand and the negative effect it had on those disciples hearing Jesus’ words for the first time. Many of his followers rejected this notion. Today, even people who interpret the Bible literally take these words as symbolic! Yet Jesus, in the face of resistance and rejection, did not waver. In fact he became more determined to make things perfectly clear (Jn. 6:53-58)

This is where decorum enters in. He could have softened his words, implying that he was speaking metaphorically. He could have told his disciples that bread and wine were a symbol for his body and blood. Rather, as John quotes him, he quite forcefully states that it is his own body and blood that must be eaten for partakers to have eternal life. The Greek verb used by the Gospel writer is not the polite word for how humans eat a meal (*phage*), but a harsh word denoting how animals eat (*trogan*) ... gnawing and munching! Jesus is telling those who would follow him that we must be voracious in our appetite for him. We must hunger and thirst for his presence in the Eucharist, and we must partake regularly.

Now there is a scriptural secret we didn’t learn in catechism classes!