

## **Bulletin Article #14 = Gospel Reading (*The Priest has Secret Prayers?!*)**

Whenever I have a longer amount of time to explain the Mass to other people, I really enjoy telling them that the Catholic Priest has a handful of secret prayers that he will pray throughout the entire Mass. Secret prayers, as a phrase, is not literally true because they are simply the prayers that are said quietly or in a low voice by the priest during a few different parts of the Mass. The first time these quiet prayers are said by the priest is before and after he reads the Gospel. As the priest is moving from his chair towards the Lectern or Ambo for the readings, when he bows to the altar in reverence, he is supposed to say the following prayer in a low voice – *“Cleanse my heart and my lips, almighty God, that I may worthily proclaim your holy Gospel.”* This is similar to what we mentioned last week, where we stand up in respect, reverence, and attention and then trace the cross over our minds, lips, and hearts in order to help us all receive as fully as possible God’s Word spoken to us from the Gospels. The priest says this prayer for himself, so that he may be a worthy instrument of God’s grace while proclaiming His Word and Jesus’ life to the people of God. Finally, at the very end of the Gospel, the priest also says a quiet prayer, and this time he is praying not only for himself but explicitly praying for everyone with this prayer. As the priest bends down and kisses the book of the Gospels, he says in a low voice, - *“Through the words of the Gospel may our sins be wiped away.”* This is our intention at every Mass, to rid ourselves and to help other people as well, to be free from any sin or selfishness and be united to the Word of God, Jesus Christ in their hearts as much as possible. May we remember that the *secret prayers* of the priest are for our benefit, and may we ask God to continue to lead us deeper into His Word this Advent, both in the Gospel reading and in our relationship with Jesus, who comes to us powerfully every Mass.