

GOING DEEPER – Understanding Active Participation - The Catholic Mass is True! (Because it is from the Church ...and not from us... Thank God!)

We are in the final countdown of bulletin articles on the Catholic Mass, and this is number three of five articles that I am writing to finish this journey of understanding and most fully participating in each Mass we attend. Last weekend, I focused in on **active participation** and how it is about **our internal prayers** and not simply our visible ministries that matter most to God. God's Word is speaking at every Mass, and our goal is to try to listen internally and receive His Word and His Love in our souls. On Christ- mas Day, I then reflected on how the many symbols, movements, smells, and sounds can actually help us **to pray internally** and with all that we are, during each and every Mass. The overarching point and purpose for both of these articles is that our goal at Mass is for every person to **"be drawn day by day into ever more perfect union with God"** (*Sacrosanctum Concilium* par. 48). Therefore, I have been really encouraging every person to open their hearts, minds, and souls to God speaking at each and every Mass. He speaks through the Bible, through the priest, through the various physical symbols, through the prayers of the Mass, and through Holy Communion. Today, I want to talk about a seemingly every simple topic, but it is very important in our modern world to clarify and understand this concept. We believe that the Catholic Mass is true. Not just true for me, or for you, but it is true in reality and therefore true for eve-ry person on this planet. The truth of the Mass does not come from each individual Catholic priest; the truth of the Mass does not come from the particular holiness of each unique person attending; the truth of the Mass actually comes from the CATHOLIC CHURCH itself.

This means that we believe as Catholics that Jesus not only gave us the early Christians to witness to his life and spread the Gospel to the corners of the world, but Jesus actually instituted a Church that was meant to preserve, teach, and spread the truth of the faith around the earth. Without trying to fully explain the theological concept of the Catholic Church's Magisterium (teaching authority), the bottom line is that we believe Jesus did not want to leave us on our own to simply argue or disagree about the essence of the Catholic Mass and how to worship Christ most fully every Sunday. When you reflect on this truth, it is actually beautiful in so many various ways. I will just mention two things to reflect on in this regard. First, when people were first de-veloping the rules to the great game of basketball, someone had to suggest the idea of dribbling a ball on the ground. I'm sure some other people didn't want to bother with the idea of dribbling a basketball. They might've said something like, "why are we wasting time dribbling a ball?...what a waste?!" However, now that this is an established rule for this particular game, most people understand the art and skill of dribbling a basketball, and they enter into this aspect of the sport as fully as possible, which helps them become the best player they can be and score as much as they can to help their team. The same can be said of the rubrics and guidelines that the Catholic Church gives for each Catholic Mass. You may not want to or fully understand – why we say each particular prayer, or why we have to stand, sit, or kneel, or why we have to hit our chest with a closed fist three times while asking God to forgive our sins...however, if you just do your best to follow the rubrics/guidelines AND ask questions to learn why each part of the Mass exists, you will grow more and more in your under-standing and practice of the Mass in order to enter it most fully with your hearts as well!!

As a priest, it is so beautiful that it is not up to me each weekend to create Sunday worship from my own subjective authority as a human being (*for example, creating every prayer from scratch, creating every Scripture from scratch, every teaching from my opinion, and every movement from my personal choice*). I have the Catholic Church. We have the prayers of the Mass, and the truth of the Mass from the Catholic Church. The Catholic Church has been given the authority from Jesus to pass down through the ages the prayers of the Mass. We know the prayers consecrate the Eucharist, holy communion, into Jesus' very body, blood, soul, and divinity every single Sunday. That is true, and this helps with us every single part of the Mass to see the specific prayer, the specific movement, or the specific symbol as coming from Jesus and therefore coming from Jesus Himself. We can then receive each thing at Mass as a very holy moment or event or word, and we see the beauty and the power of truth there as well. It is true because it is from Jesus, and therefore, it will be powerful and effective in communicating His grace to us every single time we come to a Catholic Mass.