

**Liturgical Moments**

**St. Joseph Parish**

**Lent 2024**

## February 18, 2024 : First Sunday of Lent

Good morning/evening! I am (say your name) and I serve (as a lector/ on the Liturgy Committee/ on the Vision Committee – pick one to identify yourself). Lent in our parish marks the return of our Liturgical Moments. For the next six weeks after each liturgy, someone will read a brief reflection that will help to deepen our common faith.

As many of you know, our Liturgical Moments came from a request by our Vision Committee that the parish provide some opportunities for all of us to better understand what we do when we gather for mass. The Liturgy Committee responded to this request by sharing reflections both last spring and again in the fall about different aspects of the liturgy. Last fall, we focused on our beautiful church. We all learned about our great crucifix, our unique baptismal font, and our Benedictine heritage seen in the engraving on this ambo, the saints in the stained glass over the choir loft, and the welcoming and friendly congregation itself.

We asked last fall, as we will this Lent, for your feedback and suggestions for additional topics. We ask for your questions because we are trying to be faithful to Pope Francis's vision for a more Synodal church, a church that is more collaborative and responsive to the lived experience of everyone in the pews. Thank you to everyone who took the time to fill out the form and especially to those of you who shared questions. Your feedback and suggestions are going to shape our Liturgical Reflections for this Lent.

In fact, some suggestions we received on the Feedback forms have already been implemented. For example, we received some feedback regarding the Responsorial Psalms, which are sung between the first and the second readings. The COVID-19 pandemic forced certain liturgical simplifications on us all, and one of them was that we used the same Responsorial Psalm for many months. But we received a few suggestions that we return to using the different Responsorial Psalms that are in Breaking Bread – and we have done so. Also, we heard from several people that they want to sing, but often miss the number of the song when it is announced – so, Fr. Jim has brought back our song board where you will find all the numbers of the songs for each mass. Finally,

many of you asked to see the Liturgical Moments in print. You can now find them on the website under the button called Media Resources.

But the topic that we received the greatest number of questions about was the Eucharist or communion. This makes sense given that we are still recovering from the pandemic that closed our churches and separated us from each other and from the Eucharist. In fact, the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops is in the middle of a three-year Eucharistic Revival meant to help all Catholics deepen our understanding of and relationship to the Eucharist. And while the Eucharist will be our primary focus, it will not be the only thing we will be talking about – so if you walked into church today and thought, what’s up with all the purple – you will want to be here next week when we begin learning a little about Liturgical seasons.

Thank you for your kind attention.

## February 25, 2024: Second Sunday of Lent

Good morning/evening! I am (say your name) and I serve (as a lector/ on the Liturgy Committee/ on the Vision Committee – pick one to identify yourself). Lent in our parish marks the return of our Liturgical Moments. After each liturgy for the six weeks of Lent, someone will read a brief reflection that will help us to deepen our common faith, and answer questions we've received from parishioners.

This week we want to answer some question we've received about the colors of the priest's vestments. You will notice that Fr. Jim, just last week, began to wear the purple vestments. He and the deacon are wearing purple vestments because we are in the Liturgical Season of Lent which began just last week, on Ash Wednesday. Purple is also the color of Advent, which is the beginning of our Liturgical year.

The second season of the Liturgical year is Christmas, when you will see the priest and deacon vested in white or gold vestments. The Christmas season lasts well beyond Christmas day, ending on the Feast of the Baptism of the Lord.

After the Christmas season, we enter what is known as Ordinary time, when our celebrant will wear green vestments. Ordinary Time pauses on Ash Wednesday and we enter Lent as already mentioned when vestments are purple – except for Palm Sunday, when we read one of the gospel accounts of Jesus' passion, and the celebrant's vestments will be red.

Although it's easy to think of Lent as ending on Easter, it actually ends before Easter when the Liturgy of the Lord's Supper, which is celebrated on Holy Thursday evening, begins our shortest Liturgical season of the Triduum. The word Triduum refers to the 3-day period right before Easter and includes Holy Thursday, Good Friday, and Holy Saturday up to the start of the Easter Vigil mass. Holy Thursday's liturgy, which memorializes both the institution of the Eucharist as well as ministry in the church, calls for white vestments, while Good Friday is marked with red vestments. Easter, and the Easter liturgical season which extends through Pentecost, is generally celebrated in white

or gold vestments up to Pentecost itself, when we again return to red. In our parish, not just the priest will be in red, but everyone in the whole parish is invited to celebrate our unity in and through the Holy Spirit by wearing red to our Pentecost mass.

And after celebrating the high point of the Liturgical year in the Easter season, we return once again to Ordinary Time, and the liturgical color of green, which you will see our ministers wearing through the summer and fall.

So the six seasons of the liturgical year are marked by distinct colors. Advent – purple. Christmas- white or gold; Ordinary Time – green; Lent – purple; Palm Sunday and some parts of the Triduum- red. Easter Season– white; then red on Pentecost before returning to green in Ordinary Time.

Some days, especially if you attend daily mass, you may see the priest in a different color than you are expecting because we are celebrating a Solemnity, a Feast Day or a Memorial for a certain saint. In fact, there is a special calendar in the sacristy that tells the priest and deacon which color vestments to use each day. And while there are a lot of changes over the course of the Liturgical year – the good news is that you do not need to remember them. If you ever find yourself wondering why the priest is wearing a certain color at any mass – just ask him! Fr. Jim will be more than happy to explain!

Thank you for listening!

## March 3, 2024: Third Sunday of Lent

Good morning/evening! I am (say your name) and I serve (as a lector/ on the Liturgy Committee/ on the Vision Committee – pick one to identify yourself). Lent in our parish marks the return of our Liturgical Moments. After each liturgy for the six weeks of Lent, someone will read a brief reflection that will help us to deepen our common faith. Last week we focused on Liturgical seasons and how we mark them with different colors, but this week and for the rest of Lent, we will turn our attention to the central action of every liturgical celebration – the Eucharist.

The Catholic mass has two distinct parts – the Liturgy of the Word, and the Liturgy of the Eucharist. The Liturgy of the Word includes all of our readings, reflections on the readings in the homily, the recitation of the Creed, which expresses the core claims of our faith, and finally the Petitions.

The offertory, which comes next, is the beginning of the Liturgy of the Eucharist, when our attention shifts from the ambo to the altar table. At the offertory procession you will see fellow parishioners bringing up three things: the unconsecrated bread, the unconsecrated wine, and the collection basket. We also call this offertory procession “bringing up the gifts” – because the bread, wine and collection basket are symbols of all we wish to give to God each week. The first step in preparing to receive the great gift of Jesus in the Eucharist, is for us to give of ourselves to God, and to each other as symbolized by the collection basket. As the gifts are brought up we are all invited to think about what we are able to give God this week – our prayers and our hearts, our worries and fears, our compassion and devotion – all are symbolically carried to the altar with the gifts of the offertory procession. When Fr. Jim lifts up the basket with the collection in it, and places it at the foot of the altar table, he does so to offer to God all that is in our hearts that we seek to place before the Lord.

The prayer that the priest says after receiving the gifts states, “Pray my brothers and sisters that my sacrifice AND YOURS may be acceptable to God the Almighty Father.” These words remind us that our sacrifice – our gifts given to God – are an important part of preparing ourselves for receiving the eucharist.

Although the offertory procession was widely practiced in the early church, it fell out of practice in the middle ages and wasn't restored to our liturgies until the Second Vatican Council. If you can remember the mass being said in Latin, you will remember that there were no offertory processions. The Second Vatican Council brought it back as part of the liturgical renewal aimed at leading us all to that full, conscious and active participation in the liturgy. When we carry up the gifts, and unite our hearts with them in prayer, giving over to God all that we have to offer this week, we deepen our conscious and active role in the mass – each and every one of us.

Thank you for your kind attention. Next week, more on the Eucharist.

March 10, 2024: Fourth Sunday of Lent

Good morning/evening! I am (say your name) and I serve (as a lector/ on the Liturgy Committee/ on the Vision Committee – pick one to identify yourself). Lent in our parish marks the return of our Liturgical Moments. After each liturgy for the six weeks of Lent, someone will read a brief reflection that will help us to deepen our common faith. We are focusing this Lent on the Eucharist. Last week, we spoke about the Offertory procession and how we spiritually offer our very selves to God as the gifts are brought to the altar table. This week we will focus more on the Eucharist itself.

The bible grounds our Catholic understanding of the Eucharist. In the prayers that the priest says during the eucharistic rite, we recall Jesus's last supper and his words to his friends, "Take, eat, this is my body" (Matthew, Chapter 26, verse 26) and also after blessing the wine, "Drink from it, for this is my blood of the covenant...." (Matthew, Chapter 26, verses 27 and 28), as well as "Do this in remembrance of me." (Luke, chapter 22, verse 19.) We remember Jesus's last meal with his friends, his offering of his body and blood each time we celebrate the eucharist.

Catholics believe that the elements of the eucharist – which are the bread and the wine, are truly transformed through the words of the priest and the faith of the community, into the actual body and blood of Christ. While the bread and wine look to our human eyes the same, they have been nonetheless transformed by God's grace into the actual glorified body of Christ. The Catechism of the Catholic Church tells us that:

"In the most blessed sacrament of the Eucharist, the 'body and blood, together with the soul and divinity, of our Lord Jesus Christ and, therefore, the whole Christ is truly, really and substantially contained" in the consecrated bread and wine." [No. 1374]

So while the bread and wine may look like bread and wine, we believe that they have been transformed into the "body and blood, soul and divinity" of Jesus. As Saint Thomas Aquinas tells us in his great eucharistic hymn, "Pange, Lingua, Gloriosi,"



“Faith will tell us Christ is present,  
When our human senses fail.”

Theologians call our belief that the bread and wine become the body and blood of Jesus, the doctrine of transubstantiation, but it is often also referred to as the belief in the “real presence” of Jesus in the eucharist. Many of our liturgical actions and Catholic practices derive from our belief in the real presence. For example, as we are offered communion, the minister says, “The Body of Christ” or “The Blood of Christ,” and when we reply AMEN we are saying, Yes! I believe that! When we lift up our cupped hands to receive the Body of Christ, or carefully grasp the chalice with both hands, we do so with reverence and care for our encounter with the actual Body and Blood of Christ. We will continue to reflect on the real presence of Christ in the Eucharist next week.

Thank you for your attention.

## March 17, 2024: Fifth Sunday of Lent

Good morning/evening! I am (say your name) and I serve (as a lector/ on the Liturgy Committee/ on the Vision Committee – pick one to identify yourself). Lent in our parish marks the return of our Liturgical Moments, when we take just a moment at the end of mass to learn together a little bit about our liturgical life together. We focused last week on the “real presence” of Jesus Christ in the eucharist, and are going to continue to speak of the real presence this week as we answer some questions we’ve received on the Feedback forms about our Tabernacle.

After our Liturgical Moments series last fall, several people asked about the Tabernacle. The tabernacle is where the consecrated hosts – the actual body of Christ – is reserved. Our tabernacle is centrally located in our altar space, directly underneath the Great Crucifix, and it is marked by the red hanging lamp – called the sanctuary lamp – which is lit always to remind us that Jesus is truly present in the tabernacle. In fact, when you enter the doors of our church, your line of sight tells the story of our faith – you see the baptismal font, the altar table, the great Crucifix and underneath it – the tabernacle. We are first welcomed into the body of Christ in baptism, that participation in the body of Christ is strengthened each time we partake of the body of Christ prepared at the altar table, made efficacious through Jesus’s actions on the cross, and reserved in the tabernacle.

You may have noticed that this tabernacle is new! Indeed, it had become impossible to easily secure the door on the old tabernacle, and that necessitated a new one. This new tabernacle adorned with gold and dark wood complements the style of our church building and provides a place of dignified repose for the body of Christ within.

Because the tabernacle contains the body of Christ – consecrated hosts – faithful Catholics will either genuflect or bow or bless themselves when walking in front of the tabernacle. If we did not believe in the real presence, these gestures of respect would make no sense. The doors of our church remain unlocked so that anyone can enter and spend some time with Jesus in prayer before the tabernacle.

One question we received last fall was why does the priest finish the wine but not the hosts at the end of communion. Generally, the priest tries to consecrate just enough hosts and wine to be consumed at any given mass. But this can be tricky. Hosts that remain will be placed in the tabernacle, but the consecrated wine – the Precious Blood – cannot be kept safely for another liturgy, so what is not consumed during communion, will be finished by the priest, deacon and Extraordinary ministers of Holy Communion. Having consecrated hosts in the tabernacle allows our ministers to bring communion to the sick or the home bound and makes it possible for us to be in the presence of Jesus whenever we are in church.

Thank you for listening.

## March 24, 2025: Palm Sunday

Good morning/evening! I am (say your name) and I serve (as a lector/ on the Liturgy Committee/ on the Vision Committee – pick one to identify yourself). Today is our final Liturgical Moment for this Lent, so we'd like to begin by asking you to tell us how we're doing. This spring we are going to "go green" and try to be more environmentally responsible by asking for your feedback and comments via email. An email address for Liturgy Committee is listed in the bulletin - please share your opinions about our Liturgical Moments and tell us what topics you'd like to see addressed in the future!

We've been focusing this Lent on the Eucharist, especially on our Catholic belief in the real presence of Christ in the eucharist. We spoke about that last week in relation to our tabernacle. This week we conclude by looking further into the "real presence" of Christ in the eucharist, and the value of this "bread of life" to us all.

When you think about the stories in the gospels about the ministry of Jesus, it is truly amazing just how many of them have to do with food. From Jesus's first public miracle, at the wedding feast in Cana – where he turned water into wine, through the multiplication of the loaves and fishes to feed thousands, to the dinners with friends like Mary and Martha, to choosing to eat with tax collectors, which angered the religious leaders, right up to the Last Supper, which we heard about in today's gospel – there is so much focus on shared meals! Even after his death, on the road to Emmaus, his friends recognized Jesus in the breaking of the bread.

Just as Jesus and his disciples needed food to keep up their strength so that they could spread the good news of the gospel, so too must we, as members of the body of Christ, seek the nourishment found only in the eucharist so that we can continue to bring Christ into the world. The reception of the eucharist strengthens our bodies for service in and to the world in the name of Jesus. The eucharist fuels our work for justice, and by taking into our very bodies the real presence of Jesus Christ in the eucharist, we are bound ever more firmly to both the Body of Christ and to each other. Through this communal meal, this communion, we reinforce our bonds to each other IN the body of Christ through the reception OF the Body of Christ.

The sustenance found only in the Eucharist gives us the strength to live out the gospel in our lives each week, to carry forward the mission of Jesus, bringing the good news to the poor and comfort to the brokenhearted (Is. 61: 1-2). In the eucharist, St. Augustine tells us, we become what we receive. It is our duty and privilege to go forth from the eucharistic table and bring Christ to the world.

Thank you again for your attention. Please email us your comments and questions. And remember, you can find these series of the Liturgical Moments in print under the Media Resources tab on our parish website.