

God's Presence

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Praise the Lord!

I am honored to be with you tonight as we praise our God. Although I am from the other side of the earth, I am always one with you in the Lord.

This is an amazing thought...continents and countries, oceans and languages, do not divide brothers and sisters from God. He is the Lord of all creation.

I am deeply honored to be with you in prayer tonight. You are holy people, a people called out of darkness into light. You are God's chosen people. You have seen the true light. And so you serve as a light to all people.

Your faith helps make the whole world more holy because you are an example of what it means to be faithful. With the Holy Spirit working through you, you inspire others to praise, honor, worship and serve our Lord Jesus Christ.

I would like to spend a few minutes telling you about my vocation since it is not common in this part of the world. I am a Roman Catholic Deacon.

There are thousands of deacons like me throughout the Catholic world, especially in the Americas and in Europe. Many of us are married too. I have a beautiful wife, Debra and three children. They send their greeting to you from America!

The word "deacon" is from Greek and it means servant. I have been ordained to serve Christ and His Church through ministries of the Word, Liturgy and Charity.

Like a priest, I am assigned to a parish by my Bishop. I teach and preach and bless. I baptize and marry people. I proclaim the Gospel at every Mass. And I expose the Blessed Sacrament and give Benediction.

Deacons are found in the New Testament – the Acts of the Apostles and Paul's First Letter to Timothy mention them. There is nothing new about deacons in the Church. With bishops and priests, we deacons receive the Sacrament of Holy Orders. That's

what we mean when we use the word “clergy” – those who have received Holy Orders – bishops, priests and deacons.

In fact, I am one of the few people you will meet who has received all seven sacraments: baptism, confirmation, Eucharist, reconciliation, anointing of the sick, matrimony and holy orders. Praise the Lord!



Now let us realize that we are in the holy presence of God. That is why we are here tonight – to make God’s Presence real in our lives and in the lives of others. We are here to proclaim the Kingdom of God through our words, our prayer, our songs and our lives. So praise Him – Alleluia!

God’s Holy Presence is always with us, but we fail to recognize Him sometimes. That’s what makes prayer meetings like this one tonight so important. We realize what is always true – that we are totally in God’s hands. He is embracing us. He holds us. He loves us more deeply than we love ourselves.

Sometimes we let the worries of this world hide God’s Presence from us. We let the spirit of the world take us over, instead of being filled with the Spirit of Christ. So our vision becomes clouded. We get caught up in worldly concerns, worldly ideas, worldly goals. And we lose our amazing Catholic vision.

Let us restore our Catholic vision tonight. Praise God! Let us see the Lord in our midst! Let us enter into His holy courts singing our praise!

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I have been teaching about the Mass in my parish lately. I think it is so important for us to realize how God is Present to us when we gather to celebrate the Holy Liturgy. Remember that for us Catholics, the Eucharist is the “source and summit of the spiritual life.”

Let’s call to mind how Jesus is with us in Mass.

- 1) Jesus is there in your hearts as you make your Way to Mass. Don’t forget that the very first word for the community of believers in Jesus was “The Way! “ Jesus walks with you on the Way to Mass. He is in your heart. He is the Way, the Truth, and the Life! Praise the Lord!

- 2) Jesus is there as you gather in the church.

Recall His profound words: “where two or three are gathered in my name, there I AM in their midst.” He loves it when we join together in praise. We are His chosen family. We are brothers and sisters with one Father in heaven. Just like we parents love seeing all of our children gathered around our tables, so God the Father loves seeing all of us gathered around His table. One, holy, catholic and apostolic Church gathered together. Praise the Lord!

- 3) Jesus is there in those who serve us at Mass – the ministers.

We are the People of God and we share our many gifts. The Mass ought to show these gifts clearly. God is present in the priest who presides at Mass, in the deacon who serves, in the lector, in the musicians, the cantor and psalmists, in the altar servers and greeters, in those who bring forward the gifts of bread and wine. All of these ministries ought to be present at Mass to reflect the many gifts – charisms – that we have been given through the Spirit. That’s what we mean when we use the word “liturgy” – the work of the people, all of us!

- 4) Jesus is present in the Word.

I can tell that you really love God’s Word! You read the Bible daily. How blessed you are! Praise the Lord! “God’s word is living and effective, sharper than any two-edged sword.” “It probes the depths and motives of our hearts.” We are so blessed to have God’s Word proclaimed for us at Mass.

At Mass, we usually hear from the Hebrew Scriptures, or Old Testament, first during the Liturgy of the Word. We see the wonders God worked through His Chosen people. We must never forget our roots in the faith of Abram, Isaac and Jacob. And the great prophets Moses, Elijah, Isaiah and Jeremiah.

We then sing a psalm. These are the great lyrics of praise in the Hebrew Scriptures. We make these ancient songs our own. Praise God! Alleluia! That word – “alleluia” which means “praise Yah, or praise Yahweh” is found only in the book of Psalms and in the book of Revelation. And you say that word all the time. You have made the Psalms your own. Alleluia!

On Sundays we hear a “second reading.” It is usually from one of the Letters of St. Paul. We receive practical advice on living life together as brothers and

sisters in the Lord. We realize that we are one with the ancient Church. Our joys and sorrows, our challenges and successes, were theirs too.

The highpoint of the Liturgy of the Word is the proclamation of the Gospel. It is my favourite part of the Liturgy of the Word because I, the deacon, get to proclaim the Gospel. That's a deacon's job in the Roman Catholic Church. I love it! The Gospel time is when we hear Jesus' words! We hear about His life, death and resurrection – that is, the great Mystery of Faith! We hear about his teachings and miracles, His parables and healings. We get to hear Jesus at Mass! How blessed we are! Jesus, the Word of God, is present to us at every Mass. Praised be Jesus Christ...now and forever!

5. Jesus is present in the Eucharist.

This is so important to us as Catholics. We understand that the Word of God, the Bible, is not just something you learn or think about or talk about. No! The Word of God, is not a thing...it is a Person! Jesus is the Word of God. Jesus is really Present at every Mass. "The Word becomes Flesh and dwells among us." We eat His Body and Drink His Blood so that we may have His eternal life! Jesus is really, truly and substantially Present in the Eucharist. And we become What we eat!

Thank God! That is what the word "eucharist" means – to give thanks well. Through Jesus, with Jesus, and in Jesus, in the unity of the Holy Spirit, we give our Father thanks! Alleluia!

6. Jesus is present in us as we leave Mass!

We must not forget this. We are the Body of Christ.

We leave Mass to serve the world as He did.

To preach the Kingdom of God! To heal those in pain!

To teach in His name. To fill the world with beauty, truth and goodness!

At the end of Mass, the deacon ask us to go in peace to love and serve the Lord. The word "Mass" comes from this announcement. We are to be missionaries to the world! Praise God! We must not keep Jesus to ourselves, but give Him to others as He gave Himself to us!

We have heard how Jesus is Present at Mass.

He is with us always until the ending of the world!

He is the alpha and omega, the beginning and the end!
He is with you now and forever.

Let us praise the Lord! He is our God and we are His people, the flock He shepherds.

Thank you for inviting me to be with you tonight!

May Almighty God bless you
The Father, and the Son and the Holy Spirit. Amen.