

TOGETHER

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MESSAGES FROM ARCHBISHOP JACKELS



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STATEMENT ON TRADITIONIS CUSTODES

Our Holy Father Francis (may God preserve him) issued a new norm, limiting the use of the extraordinary form of Holy Mass (EF), that is, as celebrated before Vatican II.

From now on, it's up to the local bishop to decide where, when and by whom the EF is celebrated, though within certain limits.

It's still possible to celebrate the EF, just not in a parish church (there is unfortunately no explanation for that restriction, nor a suggestion as to a suitable alternative).

Locally, the EF is celebrated at Immaculate Conception parish, Cedar Rapids. Efforts will be made, guided by the new norm, to provide for those folks.

The Pope's decision is not arbitrary, but the fruit of collaboration, consultation, and consensus with the world's bishops on the matter in question.

When Pope Benedict wore the shoes of Peter, he thought having both an extraordinary and ordinary form of Mass wouldn't foster division; sadly, it has in some places.

Pope Francis acted well within his authority. And there are no grounds to challenge his noble intention: to press on ever more in the constant search of ecclesial communion.

In response, consider St. Catherine of Siena, who prayed for unity, and urged all to behave towards the Pope as "sweet Christ on earth," whether they liked him or not.

She also taught that obedience is the one thing God can't have unless we first give it, and so it is the only true gift we can give, and the one thing God desires.

Michael O. Jackels
Archbishop of Dubuque

A Follower of Jesus in His Holy Catholic Church

This is the third entry in a document by Archbishop Michael Jackels titled, "A Follower of Jesus In His Holy Catholic Church" which was published online in April of 2021.

WHAT DID JESUS TEACH?

The Gospels tell us that large crowds traveled long distances with great excitement to see Jesus, and to witness a miracle.

A miracle is something that can't be explained by the laws of nature. The miracles Jesus worked include things like...

- Changing water into wine (this was his first miracle)
- Feeding thousands of people with just a few loaves of bread and a few fish
- Giving sight to the blind
- Giving hearing to the deaf
- Giving speech to the mute
- Enabling the lame to walk
- Healing the sick
- Restoring the dead to life

After seeing Jesus and the miracles he worked, people were more open to listen to his teaching; in fact, his teaching was often accompanied by miracles, especially healing.

THE KINGDOM OF GOD

The main theme of Jesus' teaching was the kingdom of God: "This is the time of fulfillment. The kingdom of God is at hand. Repent, and believe in the gospel." (Mark 1:15)

Here is one way to sum up the message of the kingdom of God:

1. We are sinners in need of a savior to save us from Hell for Heaven.

2. We have a savior, Jesus, who redeems us by his death and resurrection.
3. We are saved when we put faith in Jesus, are baptized, and belong to his Church.¹¹
4. We are saved by the kind of faith that makes its power felt through love.
5. We will enjoy the bliss of Heaven if we persevere in believing in Jesus, confessing to a priest when we sin gravely, and living the teachings of Jesus and his Catholic Church.

Jesus preached that living in the kingdom is kind of like standing on your head; it's upside-down in relation to the world, for example: "If anyone wishes to be first, he shall be the last of all and the servant of all" (Mark 9:35); "The one who humbles himself will be exalted" (Luke 14:11); "Whoever loses his life for my sake will save it." (Luke 9:24)

LOVE OF GOD AND FOR GOD

The Gospel of John teaches that the death and resurrection of Jesus was prompted by Divine Love: "For God so loved the world that he gave his only Son, so that everyone who believes in him might not perish but might have eternal life." (John 3:16)

The love of God is unconditional and unbounded. We can't earn it, or lose it. St. Catherine of Siena says that God is like someone drunk or crazy with love for us: it doesn't make sense. Out of love, God creates us, provides for us, saves us, accompanies us on life's journey, and longingly awaits to be united with us in Heaven.

The first and the greatest Commandment is to love God with all we've got. But there's no way we can ever return the same depth and intensity of love that God has for us. God's love is undeserved. We on the other hand owe love to God, God deserves it.

We show love for God by praying, by worshipping at Holy Mass, by obeying the Ten Commandments, and cooperating with God's plan for our vocation. But because we are limited, so is our love, and truth be told we often do these things hoping for some payback from God.

The closest way we have of making a proper return to God for his love for us is by loving

our neighbor.

"In this way the love of God was revealed to us: God sent his only Son into the world so that we might have life through him. In this is love: not that we have loved God, but that he loved us and sent his Son as expiation for our sins. Beloved, if God so loved us, we also must love one another." (1 John 4:9-11)

LOVE FOR NEIGHBOR

The following passage is, in a nutshell, what Jesus taught about the love of neighbor practiced by his followers. This might be worth memorizing, more importantly, practicing:

"Be merciful, just as [also] your Father is merciful. Stop judging and you will not be judged. Stop condemning and you will not be condemned. Forgive and you will be forgiven. Give and gifts will be given to you... For the measure with which you measure will in return be measured out to you." (Luke 6:36-38)

To love our neighbor as we are loved by God is THE sign that we are living under the reign of God. (Mark 12:28-34)

And in response to a question about who is our neighbor, Jesus told the parable of the Good Samaritan, teaching that anyone in need is our neighbor, and has a claim on our loving care and concern. (Luke 10:29-37)

To serve the poor is the word of faith planted in our hearts, that we are to put into practice by our service to people who can't protect or provide for themselves. (James 1:21-22)

This service to the poor is the epitome of a pure and unspoiled religion, (James 1:27) which can preserve us in holiness until Jesus comes again. (1 Thessalonians 3:13)

And on that day, Jesus will judge us on whether or not we loved our neighbor: those who did will enjoy Heaven, but those who did not, will not. (Matthew 25:31-46)

Serving the poor heals our souls, and covers a multitude of sins. (1 Peter 4:8) It is also a medicine to heal the Church in its members, wounded by the selfishness of sin.

Love for the poor is the most important religious practice for the followers of Jesus. Consider that when St. Paul asked Church leaders to approve the message he preached to the gentiles, they didn't make him change anything, but only insisted, "we were to be mindful of the poor, which is the very thing I was eager to do." (Galatians 2:10)

JESUS PROMISES ETERNAL LIFE

We believe that by his death, resurrection and ascension, and by the gift of the Holy Spirit, Jesus makes it possible for us to enjoy Heaven.

Death is not the end of our life, nor are we merely resuscitated, nor are we reincarnated as someone or something else. No, we ourselves will live forever in Heaven. 14

God made us in order to share Heaven with us, not because God is lacking anything, but because it's the nature of God to live to give the fullness of life and gladness to us.

Heaven is felt as the sublime bliss derived from the quieting of our desires, because they are all satisfied by our perfect union with God, all of them, at once, completely and forever, because God is the fullness of all the goods we crave.

If the good thing you crave is chili cheese flavored Frito brand corn chips, then in Heaven that craving will be quieted, because it will be completely and forever satisfied by your union with God, who is the quintessence of chili cheese flavored Frito brand corn chip-ness. Eternal rest, it's called.

HELL

Can you imagine life without chili cheese flavored Frito brand corn chips? That's Hell.

The Church teaches that Hell exists. Free will makes sin possible. And justice demands punishment for sin. Hell is the eternal punishment for unrepentant mortal sin.

Hell is experienced as the opposite of Heaven: no bliss, because our desiring is not quieted, because instead of union with God, there is eternal separation from God.

We don't know if anyone is damned in Hell. The Church has a process to declare with certainty that a person is in Heaven, but not if a person is in Hell.

It's possible that no one is there, if for no other reason than because so little is needed for us to receive God's mercy. The prodigal son only had to turn back home. The good thief, at the last minute, had only to make a simple prayer.

Or consider the woman who cried out to her pastor, St. John Vianney, scared that her husband might have gone to Hell for jumping off a bridge to his death. He replied: "I tell you he is saved. He is in Purgatory, and you must pray for him. Between the bridge and the water, he had time to make an Act of Contrition."

If anyone is in Hell, it is their fault, their fault, their most grievous fault, due to their sinful thoughts and words, by what they've done and what they've failed to do, especially failing to help the poor, and by their stubborn refusal to say sorry for it.

PURGATORY

Sacred Heart church in Rome has a display of signs alleged to be left by the Poor Souls in

Purgatory to convince people that Purgatory exists, and to get them to pray that the Poor Souls be delivered from its purifying fires. For example, the image of a man's sad face appeared on a wall after a fire, or various items that had once belonged to a dead person were found to be singed by fire.

We aren't required to believe that the items in Sacred Heart church are real, but Catholics do believe in Purgatory. The word is from Latin, meaning to purge, or purify.

Purgatory is the final purification that people who die in God's good graces may need to undergo before entering Heaven.16

The Bible says that nothing unclean can enter Heaven. (Revelation 21:27) So, even those who are judged worthy of Heaven, may need to be cleansed from venial sins, or from what's called the temporal punishment due to mortal sins that were forgiven.

Temporal punishment? Think of it like this: If I break your window, justice demands that I say that I'm sorry, and that I have the window fixed. If I die before fulfilling what justice demands from my forgiven mortal sins, then justice still has to be satisfied.

So, how's that done after death in Purgatory? Some guess that justice is fulfilled by the suffering that results from the slightest delay of the perfect bliss of Heaven. Some compare Purgatory to a purifying fire. (1 Corinthians 3:15)

We can help to quicken the final purification of the Poor Souls in Purgatory by our prayer, self-denial, and almsgiving on their behalf. Using the example of the broken window, justice demands that I repair it, but my family and friends might chip in to help me out of love for me.

It's a spiritual work of mercy to do penance, or give alms, or pray for the faithful departed in Purgatory:

Eternal rest grant unto them, O Lord, and let perpetual light shine upon them. May the souls of all the faithful departed, through the mercy of God, rest in peace. Amen.

There are many other things that Jesus taught, which are written down in the Gospels, and many things that are not written down. In fact, the apostle John ends his Gospel by saying, "There are also many other things that Jesus did, but if these were to be described individually, I do not think the whole world would contain the books that would be written." (John 21:25)

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