

## March 17, 2019 - THE JOY OF THE MASS: AN ENCOUNTER WITH GOD!

**Can you feel the presence of God at Mass?** Can you recall a recent Mass where you felt most joyful and **why did you find such joy, such peace?** **Why do you come to Mass every Sunday** (or Saturday evening)? What does the **Eucharist** mean to you? These were some of the questions that we debated during the first week of the sessions "**The Gift of the Mass**" that began Thursday, March 8 and Saturday, March 10.

Why does God call us to **keep holy the Sabbath?** By the way, this is not a suggestion, this is a commandment, an order from God: come and rest with me one day a week! Today, Jesus is asking us: can you spare one hour to be with me on Sunday? God gives us 168 hours every week: this is an unconditional Gift. Can we give back to **Him** one of those 168 hours? If we want to be with God for eternity, don't we want to be with **Him** one hour a week? God has a plan for each of us. **He** knows that to come and rest with **Him** at Mass every Sunday will bring us many graces, many blessings that will change our life on earth and prepare us for joining **Him** forever in Heaven.

**Every Mass is an encounter with God! Every Mass is an encounter with Jesus, the Son of God! Every Mass is Heaven on Earth!** God has created us in **His own image**. **He** wants us to participate in the divine life, not only after our bodies return to dust, but right now, right here. He does not want us to live like robots. He has created us to love and to be loved. He has sent us His only Son so that our **joy may be complete** (John 15:11). Through the Prophet Joel (who lived 900 years before Jesus Christ), God calls us to an **encounter** with Him: "**Return to me with your whole heart, with fasting, weeping, and with mourning**". We heard this call at **Mass on Ash Wednesday!** This is what our Lenten journey is all about: **a conversion, a return to God!** St Paul, as Ambassador for Christ, implores us to be **reconciled with God** (2 Corinthians 5:20), to turn away from our sinful actions, **to go to confession!**

As we continue to walk our Lenten journey together, I am grateful to God for all the blessings He has already poured on our parish in the last 10 days. I am grateful to God for all the many volunteers who have helped strengthen our community as a **Joyful, Spiritual Family of Families:**

1. The Shrove/Fat Tuesday Pancake Dinner (our last chance to **feast** before entering into the **fast** of Ash Wednesday), organized by our Youth and serving a record 250 dinners!
2. The large attendance at the three Masses on Ash Wednesday, especially the 7 pm Mass with a record 900 participants (with overflow in Narthex, Blessed Sacrament Chapel, and Office Entrance, making use of large screens).
3. The participation of about 200 parishioners in the first week of **The Gift of the Mass** (you can still join them).

All this augurs well for the remaining 30 days of our Lenten Journey which will continue to focus on a better understanding of the Mass and on a greater participation of our entire parish community at Mass, fostering a closer Encounter with God.

Come Holy Spirit! Help us to forgive those who have hurt us! Help us to reconcile with God and to give generously of our time, talent, and treasure to those in need (including our youth)! Come Holy Spirit! Help us to enter fully into this Lenten Journey of Prayer, Sacrifice, and Spiritual Renewal! Help us to participate in **The Tree of Mercy** (1-1-1 challenge: give up one thing, pick up one thing, and focus on one sin - see instructions near the tree in the Narthex or go to our website: [www.olhoc.org/tree](http://www.olhoc.org/tree)) Come Holy Spirit! Help us to be renewed through a better appreciation of **the Gift of the Mass, the greatest Gift from God every day: The Eucharist!** Help us to discover the **joy of the Mass** through a closer encounter with Jesus at every Mass!

One in Christ,  
*Fr. Alain*