

BULLETIN -- NOVEMBER 19

Special collections. Have you developed some joint inflammation from unexpectedly having to reach into your wallet or purse every time you come to church, for a special collection? Well, it's not QUITE that bad, but if it seems like we've had more than our regular share of after-Communion offerings for particular causes -- WE HAVE! Recall that two of them were *ad hoc* collections for recent natural disaster victims, and then we have had the regular Bishops' Relief Fund (4th Sunday of Lent), Holy Thursday for Capitol Lunch, Good Friday for the Holy Land, diocesan CSA (May), and Mission Sunday (October). This weekend is the annual Campaign for Human Development, Thanksgiving Day the offering goes to Capitol Lunch, and the Retirement Fund for Religious collection is on December 9-10. Every other year we have a special mission appeal during the summer. All of these opportunities enable you, if you wish, to attend to the mission needs of the local, national, and universal Church very generously without having to mail in any individual contributions of your own. But then there's our own local Christian service collection on the first full weekend of each month -- that one was established many years ago because our poor boxes kept getting ripped off, sometimes right off the wall! As a parish, you have been extraordinarily generous with all of these special needs, as well as with our offering on the second Sunday of the month for the rebuilding of the Church in Lithuania, a mission close to the ethnic heart of our parish.

The Knights of Columbus at present have a Church-wide mission appeal going on for the persecuted Christians of the Middle East. We've been asked by our Council how we might best participate in that, and have decided to take it up in place of our December Christian Service collection. So, keep in mind that the offering after Communion the first weekend of December will be given to the Knights for their efforts with the ancient churches which ISIS has been trying to wipe off the face of the earth.

Thanksgiving Day Mass will be at 9 a.m. This is really an American holyday, and we invite you to make it a liturgical and spiritual experience as well. As we mentioned, the collection at that Mass goes directly to Capitol Lunch to help feed those in the city who rely on that service for a fine hot meal at no cost.

The sacrament of Confirmation for our parish candidates this year is scheduled for **Wednesday, March 14, 2018, at 7 p.m.** at St. Andrew's Cathedral. Along with our young people who are celebrating the sacrament that evening, we welcome any others from high school age and up who have not yet done so to join us. Some preparation is required, however; so please call the parish office at 454-6000 to let us know that we should include you in it. Please let us know before the end of November so we can arrange an appropriate schedule of instruction for you. If you are planning to be married within the next couple years and have not been confirmed, this is a fine opportunity for you to attend to it.

Pope Francis on behavior at Mass. In his Wednesday general audience on November 8, Pope Francis zeroed in on a couple points of Eucharistic dehortment which

the whole Church needs to hear, loud and clear. Let's listen (or read): "The Mass is not a show: it is to go to meet the passion and resurrection of the Lord. The Lord is here with us, present. Many times we go there, we look at things and chat among ourselves while the priest celebrates the Eucharist. . . But it is the Lord! At one point during the Mass the priest says, 'We lift up our hearts.' He does not say, 'We lift up our phones to take photographs!'"

"It's a bad thing! And I tell you that it gives me so much sadness when I celebrate here in the Piazza or Basilica and I see so many raised cellphones, not just of the faithful, even of some priests and even bishops. But think: when you go to Mass, the Lord is there! And you're distracted. But it is the Lord! It is fundamental for us Christians to understand well the value and meaning of the Holy Mass to live more and more fully our relationship with God.

"In the Eucharist we rediscover, through our senses, what is essential. Just as the Apostle Thomas asked to see and touch the wounds of Jesus after his resurrection, we need the same thing: to see him and touch him to be able to recognize him. In this way, the Sacraments meet this very human need of ours. And in the Eucharist, in particular, we find a privileged way to meet God and his love.

"The Second Vatican Council was inspired by the desire to help Christians understand the beauty of the encounter in the Eucharist even better. This is why it was necessary first to implement, with the guidance of the Holy Spirit, an adequate renewal of the liturgy. A central theme emphasized at Vatican II was the liturgical formation of the faithful, which is also the aim of the series of catechesis I begin today: to help people grow in the knowledge of this great gift God has given us in the Eucharist."

As a side note, Pope Francis asked if people had noticed the haphazard way children (and, we would add, not a few adults!) make the sign of cross at Mass, moving their hand all over their face and chest, as though they were brushing flies away. "We need to teach children to make the sign of the cross well," he said, noting that this is how Mass begins, because just as Mass begins this way, "so life begins, so the day begins." Concluding his reflection on the Mass and the Eucharist, Pope Francis said that he hopes that through his upcoming brief weekly lessons, everyone will rediscover the beauty "hidden in the Eucharistic celebration, and which, when revealed, gives a full meaning to the life of everyone."

Virtuous behavior is within reach! The Council of Trent had a response to Luther's claim that fallen human nature is so totally depraved that man can do nothing for himself, but has to rely completely on undeserved justification by God. The Council taught that it is always possible to keep the moral law. "God does not command impossibilities; but by commanding, admonishes you to do what you can and to pray for what you cannot, and aids you that you may be able." It also states: "If anyone says that the commandments of God are, even for one who is justified and constituted in grace, impossible to observe, let him be *anathema*." *Anathema* is a Greek word, used for centuries in the Church to mean that the doctrine being taught is condemned as false, and anyone holding to it is subject to excommunication. It is the strongest possible dogmatic correction. God bless you!

Fr. Den

Thought for the week: “What the soul is to the body, Christians are to the world” (*Letter to Diognetus*, post-Apostolic writing, late 100’s).