

From the Pastor – March 2, 2014
The Mass - Homily

Dear Friends,

This is my March column on the Mass. In the February column – which was just last week – I finished my comments on the Gospel. Today I am focusing on the Homily and beginning our look at the Creed (Profession of Faith).

The homily finds its roots in the New Testament. There is the well-known story of the two disciples walking on the road to Emmaus not long after Jesus' death. Jesus appears and, without their recognizing him, begins to explain the Scriptures about the Messiah, especially about how he would have to suffer and die (Luke 24.13-35). Then there is the story (somewhat humorous) of Paul speaking about Jesus until the middle of the night to a group of people gathered in a home. One young man was sitting on the window sill, dozed off asleep, and fell out the window (not something I want my homilies to do to people). By the way, this young man was injured but ended up okay (Acts 20.7-12). We also find that Saint Justin the Martyr, in the second century, describes a Liturgy of the Word with the Scripture being read and then the presider explaining and applying it to peoples' lives.

The word *homily* comes from a Greek word meaning a speech that is familiar in style and down-to-earth. In this way, it is different in style from classical rhetoric which is much more formal. It is different in substance from a sermon which is frequently on a non-Scriptural religious theme, especially doctrine. A homily is usually to be an explanation and application of the Scripture that has just been proclaimed. It is an important part of the Mass. It requires that the priest or deacon pray and reflect on the Scriptures, read background materials on the passages or the themes emerging in them, and then prepare his comments to the best of his ability.

At Sunday Masses, the Creed or Profession of Faith immediately follows the homily. The idea is that having been nourished by the Word of God, all who are present unite in professing our common faith.

Evidence shows that by the middle of the second century, the Church's catechesis revolved around the Trinity – God as Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. This was the basis for preparing people for Baptism and quickly gave birth to the statement of belief that today we call the Apostles Creed. Though not written by the apostles, it does date back to these earliest centuries of the Church. It succinctly presents the fundamentals of Christian

faith and is simpler than the Nicene Creed that we usually recite at Mass (more about this Creed next time).

The Apostles Creed is in the Roman Missal as an option to the Nicene Creed. It is especially recommended to be used on the Sundays of Lent and Easter because of its clear connection with Baptism and the renewal of Baptismal promises that characterize these seasons. We will be using the Apostles Creed at Saint Margaret beginning next Sunday, the First Sunday of Lent, and continuing until Pentecost in early June.

In my April column on the Mass, I will focus on the Nicene Creed: its origin, structure and some of its specific wording. I began these monthly columns last June, and you may find all ten of them by going to the parish website at www.stmargaret.org, clicking on the Information tab and then clicking on Bulletins. These columns will be on that page.

May the Lord's peace be with you and your loved ones!

Father Mike