

3rd Sunday of Easter

Cycle A

May 8, 2011

Saint Margaret Parish, Bel Air

Respect

If we go to an Ironbirds game at Ripken Stadium or to an O's game at Camden Yards, the game always begins with the *Star Spangled Banner*.

We stand for this, our National Anthem, and gaze at the flag. We are silent while this is sung or maybe we sing along.

During this, those in the military may salute the flag and others may place their hand over their heart. These actions express our respect for our country and for the principles upon which it was founded.

In a similar way, if we go to a restaurant, we abide by the rules of decorum.

In most restaurants here in Harford County, we are expected to dress casually, but neatly. In some restaurants, we men are expected to wear a jacket.

When we are at the beach, like Ocean City, the restaurants may even say that shoes are required. These rules help us to respect one another and the decorum of the restaurant as a place to eat and even dine together.

Reverence

Today's readings call us to something similar when we are here at Mass.

In our second reading, Saint Peter talks about reverence. He is saying that if we believe and pray, we should conduct ourselves with reverence.

So, when we are here in church to pray, to participate in Mass and receive the Eucharist, we are to conduct ourselves with reverence. Today's gospel tells the story about the two disciples walking on the road to Emmaus and Jesus joining them, even though they do not at first recognize him.

In the story, we see the three core elements of the Mass. 1) First, there are these two disciples with Jesus, much like us gathered together here with Jesus as the center of attention.

2) Then, Jesus breaks open or explains the Scriptures to these two disciples. Here at Mass, the same thing happens as the Scriptures are proclaimed to us.

3) And finally, Jesus takes the bread, blesses it, breaks it, and gives it to the two disciples at Emmaus. Here at the altar the priest takes the place of Jesus and does the same thing for us.

To go back to the words of Saint Pater, we need reverence for each of these elements of our worship. We need to show reverence for: 1) the people gathered here, 2) for the Word of God, and 3) and for the Sacrament of the Eucharist.

For People, Word, and Sacrament

So, 1) reverence for those gathered here calls for a spirit of welcoming and hospitality.

It calls for appropriate dress, I suggest what we usually describe as dress casual and maybe more if we are serving in a ministry here at Mass. It calls for sharing and talking at appropriate times, and being quiet or silent at other times so as to allow others to pray.

2) Reverence for the Word of God calls the lectors and deacon or priest to prepare and proclaim the Word just as best as we can.

It calls us to treat the Lectionary and the Book of the Gospels carefully as sacred books. And it calls all of us to listen attentively to the readings and try to discern how they apply to me right now in my life situation.

3) And then reverence for the Eucharist calls us to genuflect or at least to bow to the Lord's presence in the tabernacle when we enter and then when we leave the church.

It calls us to respond consciously "*Amen*" – in other words, "*Yes, I believe*" – to the words "*The Body of Christ*" and "*The Blood of Christ*" as we receive Communion. It requires that we handle the consecrated bread and wine with special care and not just as ordinary food and drink.

Conclusion

So, I am saying that the celebration of Mass calls us to a certain attitude and behavior.

We are called to have reverence, to be aware of the presence of the sacred and to express this by our actions. This opens our minds and hearts to the risen Christ who is here and who comes to us in the liturgy.