

February 12, 2017

Heart of the World X

Like the heart in the body, the very center and life-moving force of the Church is the Eucharist. All of the other Sacraments and the whole life of Grace and the Church in the world flow from it and lead back to it.

2017 commemorates 100 years since the apparitions of the Blessed Mother to Lucia, Jacinta, and Francisco at Fatima. In this column, we have been discussing how an Angel appeared to them three times in order to prepare them to meet Our Lady. One of the most important things he desired to teach them was the practice of Reverence (or Piety).

This Gift of the Holy Spirit precedes any interaction (prayer) with God and denotes an interior attitude that is also expressed outwardly. The Angel was able to *appear* to bow, kneel, prostrate, etc. but could not actually do so. Angels do not have bodies. The fact that we can worship with our bodies is a source of wonder and amazement to them. (cf. Lk, 15:10; Eph 3:10; Heb 2)

However, Angels, who perceive reality with perfect clarity, have a lot to teach us about Reverence. We become tired, or sore, or sick, or injured and get distracted by the gift of our bodies from what we can do with them.

Last week we began to look at what the Sacred Space of a church building is and represents as a way to understand how we ought to behave in church with Reverence/Piety. If the Sanctuary where the priest ministers and the Altar, Ambo, (and usually) the Tabernacle reside represents Heaven then the Nave (the part where the congregation sits) is the anteroom where we can all look in, but cannot yet go. It is a choreographic metaphor for our lives here in this world.

We concluded last week explaining that the Altar is the holiest object in any church. It is at the same time both the table of the Last Supper and the Cross of Our Lord's sacrifice. It is holier even than the Tabernacle where the Blessed Sacrament is reserved. This is because Christ (of course Present in the Eucharist) did not save us by means of a Tabernacle, but by the Cross.

The Ambo is where the Word of God is proclaimed. It is also dedicated to this purpose and is a kind of Altar to Jesus as the Eternal Word. It also should not be used for any other purpose than proclamation of the Scriptures, preaching, and leading formal communal prayers (which is a participation in the intercessory mission of Christ).

At the Ambo the Lector, Psalmist, Deacon, or Priest literally lend their bodies (and their minds as they prepare to read and proclaim the Word with clarity and understanding) to Christ as the Eternal Word that He may speak to and lead His people in prayer.

Fr. Michael