

February 19, 2017

Heart of the World XI

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.

Over the last couple of weeks, we have pondered the meaning and purpose of the various objects and areas that are in the formally dedicated Sacred Spaces of our Church buildings. They are the setting of the choreography of the Divine Worship as it is the intersection point between Heaven and Earth and is present in both.

As the Church directs the presence of this Divine Worship in the world, slowly over time there are developments of our practice that occur as a result of the development of our understanding. Unfortunately, over the last few generations, these things have been as subject to fads as are clothing styles.

In many churches you can see the vestiges of these fads. Church layout/design; colored Altar clothes; various use of banners; seasonal decorations beyond flora like desert scenes in Lent, pools in Easter, etc.; removing the Blessed Sacrament from the Sanctuary; changing out the Crucifix for a depiction of Christ resurrected; colors and materials of vestments; use or non-use of candles and where they are located; and the list is virtually endless.

Succumbing to faddish change as opposed to considered development has been unfortunate because it has subjected our souls to the unintended meta-message that to be relevant things need to change and stay “up to date”. Even worse, is a subconsciously perceived sense of instability.

This is not to say all change is bad. It is not. Development requires change, but it needs always to be held up against the original meaning and considered if this will still be a good idea 50 or 100 years from now. Next week—Altar rails.

Fr. Michael