



General Minutes from Lake/Geauga District Meeting

January 10, 2022

St. Gabriel was hosting parish

Prayer/Lunch/Welcome from Gina Rensi, District Chair

We had 39 members attend.

Thank you to St. Gabriel for hosting today and for the fabulous meal.

Welcome back to Fr. Fred who is joining us today 6 weeks post-op from open heart surgery. Glad to have you back.

Bishop's Mass for Lake/Geauga District scheduled for Sunday, January 23, 2022 has been cancelled due to the ongoing pandemic.

Fr. Dave gives Presbyteral Council update:

- 1) Next Presbyteral Council meeting is at the end of February. If there are any issues to bring up to the council, please let Fr. Dave know.
- 2) Next Priest meeting for the District is at Divine Word on January 31st at 4:45p-6:30p
 - a. Please complete the survey form that was sent out to the parishes prior to the meeting so that results can be tabulated.
 - b. Continuing to research sacramental availability of the priests/parishes in the district.

Introduced his brother Fr. Mike Woost who has been at St. Mary's Seminary going on 23 years. He will speak on the new document entitled *The Mystery of the Eucharist in the Life of the Church*.

Fr. Mike Woost:

New document is from the USCCB (US Council of Catholic Bishops). Copies are available on the tables and also a pdf was sent out to all participants. Fr. Mike assuming that most have not yet read the document, so his talk will be based on that and he will walk us through the document and share some things with us. PowerPoint presentation is also going to be attached.

SLIDE 1:

- Document is NOT from the Committee on Divine Worship but rather from the Committee on Doctrine. Because it is coming from that committee it tells you that the primary concern is about the Theology **of** the Eucharist.
- Liturgical Theology-actual celebration of our Liturgies/of the Eucharist itself. Our encounter with the presence of God in the actual praying of the liturgy.
- Theology **FROM** the Eucharist- looking at the liturgical books (Roman Missal) and unpacking the meaning of the liturgy and from way the liturgy is supposed to be celebrated.
- Theology **OF** the Eucharist can talk about Eucharist entirely apart from the liturgical celebration of the Mass. In this document there are very few references to the Mass itself.

- This Document is about presenting the tradition of the Eucharist in our church.
- Dealing with the Theology **OF** the Eucharist and the essential items to focus on when catechizing about the Eucharist.

SLIDE 2

Fr. Mike counted the resources himself throughout the document. When Roman Missal is mentioned is it usually a quotation from a prayer in the Missal.

SLIDE 3

References a 2 hour Presentation from Bishop Andrew Cozzins accompanies this document and could be used for Adult Faith Formation in your parish. One of the things that Bishop Cozzins mentions is that the Bishops in the US consider that we are in a time of Eucharistic Crisis. The bishops are concerned about the faithfuls understanding of Eucharist as sacrifice and the faithfuls understanding of the Real Presence of Christ in the Eucharist. A number of national studies done over the years point to the fact that what people believe about the Eucharist does not align with the Church's teachings.

Also a concern about the relationship between the personal and public celebration of Eucharist. Eucharist is not just a 'Me and Jesus' relationship but rather is meant to help us relate to the community, especially as Catholics. There is a whole ecclesial dimension to our Eucharist celebration.

Moral transformation at the personal and public level. Concern out of political issues with US Catholic politicians and their stand on life issues and whether they should be receiving communion. That is a background issue that has prompted this document.

Sunday obligation issue came up especially with respect to the Pandemic. What is liturgical participation all about?

SLIDE 4

Part 1: How does Christ's sacrifice relate to the Eucharistic sacrifice? Communion with Christ at a personal level and at an Ecclesial level.

Part 2: Liturgy is an opportunity to give thanks to God and Eucharist is an act of worship in response to God's saving activity in Christ. What kind of moral transformation is expected by those who receive the Eucharist? How is the Eucharist related to our growth in holiness. Food for our journey in this life and to eternal life.

SLIDE 5

Sent Forth-Current teachings of Pope Francis and Missionary Discipleship

Document is not very long. Context is evolving in the sense that the pandemic has had a tremendous effect on our experiences of the Eucharist. But even before the pandemic there

were concerns about what average folks understand about the Eucharist. Primary content is our Eucharist Tradition. Bishops are presenting our beliefs (fundamental theology) regarding Eucharist. No new information presented. A short document that highlights our beliefs, the document is not exhaustive.

SLIDE 6

Highlights of the Context of the Document. At the height of the pandemic Pope Francis in the Vatican inviting everyone into a time of prayer at the Basilica of St. Peter in the presence of the Exposed Blessed Sacrament. This is where the document begins. At beginning of the document the bishops want to take a hopeful tone and remind us that Christ is present with us. The clearest sign of Christ's presence with us is the Eucharist. But then document goes into noting how the pandemic has had an effect upon our experience of celebrating the Mass in the context of our parish communities. A community that has become more physically distanced and virtual participants in the Mass. For some members of the community, this led to a deepening of a hunger to be with the Eucharistic community. But for some this has led to discouragement and maybe a sense of apathy with regard to our Eucharistic life (have learned to live without the Eucharist). Fr. Mike also shared anecdotally that he's heard of some who stop watching the virtual Mass after the homily. Didn't see a need to keep watching after the homily if they weren't going to receive communion. They were fed by the preaching only.

SLIDE 7

This document is not exhaustive. Purpose of document is to illustrate what people REALLY believe about the Eucharist. Introduction is ended with a sense of hope saying that what we want to do is focus on Christ's gift of himself in the Eucharist and our response.

SLIDE 8

Things that Fr. Mike found interesting in the document: This section begins with notion that "Christ glorifies the Father by bringing us salvation." The document doesn't define salvation as what we get after we die but salvation begins in the here and now with our lived encounter with Christ at Church and through the sacraments uniquely with Eucharist.

Salvation-nothing less than sharing in the very life of God. When we receive the Eucharist, we receive the WHOLE of God's life (Christ, God and the Spirit). We are united with the divine life itself (*divinization*). Our participation in the divine life is the divinization of the human person. This is one of the first documents on the Eucharist that mentions divinization specifically. The result of our participation in the Eucharist is our lives are *divinized*. We are more than just human because our lives have been united to the very life of God. Early Church fathers had no trouble saying that God became human so that humans can become God. Very early in this document the idea of divinization is brought up.

SLIDE 9

To encounter Christ will lead to a transformation of the human person. The Real Presence is the CAUSE of what the sacrament itself effects in us. Bishops highlight that Christ is SUBSTANTIALLY present in the Eucharist. Substantial= the totality of the gift he offers to us. Substantial used as a philosophical term. He gives the WHOLE of himself in the Eucharist, well beyond just the physical. St. Thomas Aquinas says anytime you try to define the REAL PRESENCE you are actually limiting the reality because there is no way to put the reality into words. The closest we come is “transubstantiation.” Eucharist is not just important in the celebration of the Mass but also in Eucharistic Adoration, parishes annual exposition of the sacrament, Eucharistic processions, etc.

SLIDE 10

Christ is giving the WHOLE of himself to us. Not just a personal encounter, reception of holy communion deepens are relationship with the Holy Trinity and with one another. Sharing in the “whole of God’s life.” Christ is effecting in us a communion. We are united with one another in a very unique way through our reception of holy communion. This is an ecclesial reality. During catechesis we should always relate any of the sacraments to the Eucharist. Because all of the sacraments find their fulfillment in the Eucharist. By going to Mass on Sunday, we discover our identity as the body of Christ in the Eucharist. We discover our identity in the sacraments of initiation. We are given our identity in Baptism and this identity is deepened in Confirmation and celebrated with each Eucharist. To come to Mass on Sunday is not just fulfilling a rule but to say who we are and whose we are in Christ.

SLIDE 11

We are coming together primarily not to “get” but to “give.” To give thanks to God and as we give thanks God gives back so much to us. Because God gives us the whole of God’s ownself. Bishops emphasize full, conscious and active participation. For example, praying, singing, responding, listening, etc. Isn’t just about singing more, but about divinization. How the presence of God is being manifest in this celebration—about the dying, rising, and finding new life in Him. One of the most interesting sections is how the bishops indicated it is the responsibility of bishops and priests to celebrate reverently. Obviously, the bishops have some concern that something is not going the way it should be going. This is a clear directive aimed at bishops and priests. Must provide liturgies that are well celebrated and well prayed. Poor liturgical principle “do the red, say the black.” It takes more than doing that to celebrate well to pray well. It’s not just about getting through the ritual. Make sure that the folks have a meaningful, prayerful celebration of the Eucharist that represents what the church believes.

SLIDE 12

Our transformation is not restricted to a private sphere. Society and church are being transformed by our response to Christ’s presence and activity in our Eucharist celebration.

Politicians have a “special responsibility.” Our faith should have an impact on how we live and how we present ourselves and this extends into the public sphere. Faith is not a private matter.

SLIDE 13

They don't point to just one life issue (abortion, care for elderly, immigration/migration, etc). We have to address all life issues and when we do not we have to be willing to admit where we are not living life Eucharistically but more selfishly. Call for recognition to repentance and conversion. Bishops now do an exposition on the nature of sin and talking about the difference between mortal and venial sin. Mortal sin cuts one off from the rest of the Ecclesial community. Receiving the Eucharist while in the state of mortal sin is a contradictory sign. Bishops want us to be CLEAR on the church's teaching about sin. The Eucharist is a healing sacrament and brings about the forgiveness of sins but we need to be attentive to the “potential rupture of ecclesial communion” if we are not authentically living out the gospel message.

SLIDE 14

Next section is on the proper disposition for worthy reception of Holy Communion, but there is a whole separate pamphlet on this topic. You can get this document from the USCCB and it talks about the criteria for worthily receiving the Eucharist. Next session invites those who have been away from the church or those in a serious state of sin to be willing to engage in the sacrament of Penance and see that as intimately connected to our Eucharistic faith and being a healing sacrament as well. Several Saints and Blesseds held up as examples of those who have lived their Eucharistic faith. It is another way for the bishops to say we have people who have modeled the Eucharistic life and some of them were very young. And we should be holding those people up as models for the faith community.

SLIDE 15

Two paragraphs entitled Send Forth which focuses on the need for evangelization. Not just the responsibility of the professional ministers, but all of us are called to evangelize. The reason that at the end of Mass there is a dismissal, we are sent forth to continue the mission of Christ and to bring his presence into the world. All of the baptized should see themselves as Missionary Disciples (per Pope Francis). We need to draw forth from people their own experience of being a part of the Eucharistic community. Why is Eucharist important to them? If they find joy in their faith, why wouldn't they want to share that experience with others? Harkens back to the early church...people looking at the disciples and saying, look how they love one another. What it is about them to make them different and the willingness of the disciples to share their experience of Christ. It is an invitation for us to invite the people of our communities to enter into a conversation about why Christ is important in their own lives and why Eucharist is important to them.

SLIDE 16

Conclusion of two paragraphs. This document is a starting point to get a dialogue moving and sharing our experience with the Eucharist both as a celebration and a belief. Bishops are hoping this document might be one piece that will lead to a Eucharistic Revival.

Bishop Andrew Cozzens, on [The Mystery of the Eucharist in the Life of the Church \(reviveparishes.com\)](http://reviveparishes.com) gives a two hour presentation on this document. Presentation is broken down into 8 sections (longest section is 25 min). Toward the end he focuses on Eucharistic Revival.

SLIDE 17

In terms of application, the document doesn't offer any. It doesn't tell us what to do with the information. The document only provides a foundation to reflect on our Eucharistic faith, but no guidance on what are the next steps. Fr. Mike's suggestions- 1) read the document in light of our personal experience and in light of the experience of our parish communities. Are the folks reflecting the lack of understanding of basic Catholic faith? 2) Use document for catechesis, preaching and formation. Look at themes to explore in teaching and preaching. Preaching can be focused on the Scripture or on any aspect of Eucharistic celebration. The theme of divinization is found in the Prayers after Communion if you look in the Missal. 3) Consider the Eucharistic beliefs that may not be understood or accepted. It is not that the people don't believe, it might just be that they have an inaccurate understanding of our beliefs. For example, people may be stuck in a pious experience of Communion so that the Communion song is seen as an interruption of their prayer and not a part of their prayer. Presiders must make sure the Sacred Silence after Communion is revered. Must accurately communicate our beliefs to the faithful in our preaching and in the way that we celebrate the Eucharist with an emphasis on our Eucharistic practice. These are only a few things to look at with respect to application, there are others.

Questions:

Maureen Dowd asks: how is this document related to the DMI section of Liturgical Practices? How do we take the information from the DMI and look at it through the lens of the Document on the Eucharist?

Fr. Mike: Did not know that the DMI existed until a few days ago. What goes out from the diocese to the parishes, does not necessarily go through the seminary. Currently there is no Director for Worship at the Diocese, so a lot of what could have been coming out of this document just hasn't happened at this point. We don't have anyone spearheading a diocesan discussion about this. I am sure there are applications that could be made.

Fr. David Stavarz: What proceeds this document? What is more basic than this is the idea of sacramentality. I wonder what is the relationship between faith and the sacraments. Amongst my peers we don't know what the sacraments are and why they make a difference to our faith.

The sacraments make God tangible in our lives. And that would bear more fruit for me if we have that discussion prior to discussing the Document on the Eucharist.

Fr. Mike: At the core of our Catholic vision is sacramentality. God uses concrete signs to communicate God's presence to us. Many people don't know how to translate that into our everyday living. In our preaching we could unpack some of that for folks.

Maureen: with the application, most folks in the pew wouldn't be able to understand the presentation that you gave us today. It's a challenge to approach the ordinary folks in the pew or the ones not in the pew (due to pandemic), especially those who say "it's okay" that I don't receive communion because I didn't during the pandemic. How do we approach these people?

Fr. Mike: Provide opportunities for people to come together to have those conversations—adult faith formation, raise these questions in the bulletin. These are good people but we have to find ways to initiate the conversation. Use some of the available resources. For example, Bishop Cozzens presentation was helpful to know the purpose of the document. Some people may take advantage of the resources if they knew they were available. Bring people together and talk about their experience and get them to articulate that.

Fr. Mike is available to be a resource in the future and is happy to discuss this further if needed.

Announcements:

Charlie Hunt from St. Justin Martyr announces that TOB Cleveland will have an all day Workshop at St. Justin on Saturday, January 29th, 2022.

Maureen Dowd lead closing prayer.

Next Lake/Geauga District Meeting is Monday, March 14, 2022 11:45 am – St. Noel