



13TH SUNDAY OF THE YEAR
FR RALPH HOMILY AT 9.00 MASS

“Once the hand is laid on the plow,
no one who looks back is fit for the kingdom of God!”
Luke 9: 62

Do people in our culture accept the invitation of the Lord to be plowmen? It is a demanding call and it is at times difficult not to look over our shoulder at what we've left behind.

Does the Master of the harvest have difficulty finding people in our day to send to do the harvesting? Is this something to do with the quality of our faith, our 'faith-vision' as opposed to our "senses-vision"? Many of our fellow-citizens in the world of the new millennium are understandably mesmerized by the new technology. We *see* the digitalized world of immediate communication. We peer into the origins of the universe millions of light years away through the Hubble telescope. In the field of medicine, prolonging life in this world with heart surgery, including transplant, has become almost routine. But if there are to be more laborers to send to do the harvesting, the Master needs more people who are mesmerized by the *Divine* life, and who are fascinated by what as Christians we *believe*. The world of faith. Jesus, God *and* Man. Jesus' love for each human being going as far as death on a cross to win our adoption into this divine life. 'This is my body.' 'This is my blood.' 'Do this in memory of me.' Our humble God feeding his creatures with his own Body and Blood. As John Paul II said in his encyclical on the Eucharist, we should be stupefied, filled with stunned wonder, at the amazingness of this mystery of faith. In the measure that people in our culture *are*, — our culture of home, parish, diocese, nation — there will be a long line of candidates hoping to be accepted for ordination to the priesthood, whether as religious or as diocesan priests. At the heart of this mystery of faith is the Eucharist. In his long-awaited exhortation *Sacramentum Caritatis* Pope Benedict articulates the fruit of the 2005 Synod on the Eucharist, the Source and Summit of the Church's life. When talking about the beauty of the Eucharist he writes:
“Jesus Christ shows us how the truth of love can transform even the dark mystery of death into the radiant light of the resurrection. Here the splendor



of God's glory surpasses all worldly beauty. The truest beauty is the love of God, who definitively revealed himself to us in the paschal mystery. The beauty of the liturgy is part of this mystery; it is a sublime expression of God's glory and, in a certain sense, a glimpse of heaven on earth. The memorial of Jesus' redemptive sacrifice contains something of that beauty which Peter, James and John beheld when the Master, making his way to Jerusalem, was transfigured before their eyes (cf. *Mk 9:2*). Beauty, then, is not mere decoration, but rather an essential element of the liturgical action, since it is an attribute of God himself and his revelation. These considerations should make us realize the care which is needed, if the liturgical action is to reflect its innate splendor.”

#35 Sacramentum Caritatis

Prayer is the central way to receive that increase of faith which we need if we are to be amazed.

So here are a few thoughts about Prayer.

First let us ask the question WHY do we need to pray? Because I believe that God is *personally* present in my deep self, my soul, I can talk to him; or be consciously with him. If the Lord of the universe thinks enough of me that he is, through grace, personally present in me and if this Lord of the universe, has proved his love for me by dying for me should I not take time to BE with him and thank him? Maybe even return this love that he so discreetly extends towards me.

WHEN? Certainly I should choose times that I may devote ENTIRELY to him. Perhaps in the morning and at night for ten or fifteen minutes BUT I could also get used to turning to him during the day at particular times. I could choose times that are able to be used for this. You could select the ones that suit YOU. In your automobile, waiting in the check-out line in Sams or Dierbergs. You could get into a habit of turning useless ‘waiting’ time into ‘glance-at-God’ time, prayer time. ‘Glance-at-the-one-who-loves-you-so-much’ time!

“HOW?” You may be thinking: “I can’t do it because my faith that he is present in me is so tepid and frail! My vision of him is so blurry and



confused.” Pray for a greater gift of faith. It *will* be given you. Get to reconciliation so that you can get rid of the sin that muddies the waters, cataracts our spiritual eyes and prevents our seeing clearly the reality of his presence. What sin? It may be hatred, it may be unforgiveness, it may be lust, it may be neglect of God, it may be one of many forms of arrogance. Ferret it out! You’ll recognize it if you take a long, cool, honest glance at yourself. THEN, after reconciliation, use well-known prayers , parts of the Our Father, short prayers: ‘Lord, I love you.’ ‘Lord, forgive me.’ ‘Lord, may I desire you as much as I need you.’ Above all keep trying and stick with what works. What works NOW not what ‘used-to-work-when-I-was-some-years- younger!’

I will end by quoting # 19 of John Paul II’s MANE NOBISCUM, one of his last messages to us:

“Abide in me, and I in you” (Jn 15:4)

19. When the disciples on the way to Emmaus asked Jesus to stay “with” them, he responded by giving them a much greater gift: through the Sacrament of the Eucharist he found a way to stay “in” them. Receiving the Eucharist means entering into a profound communion with Jesus. “Abide in me, and I in you” (*Jn 15:4*). This relationship of profound and mutual “abiding” *enables us to have a certain foretaste of heaven on earth*. Is this not the greatest of human yearnings? Is this not what God had in mind when he brought about in history his plan of salvation? God has placed in human hearts a “hunger” for his word (cf. *Am 8:11*), a hunger which will be satisfied only by full union with him. Eucharistic communion was given so that we might be “sated” with God here on earth, in expectation of our complete fulfillments in heaven.