

## Reflections on 'Why Catholic'

In February of 2019, our parish introduced a four-year "JOURNEY THROUGH THE CATECHISM" Renew International program in 'faith formation and growth in holiness'. The first season was "PRAY: Christian Prayer".

We acknowledged Prayer as a gift from God - a loving relationship with God that is a part of our daily lives. As in any loving relationship, in order to promote our spiritual growth, we put aside quality time each day, to devote ourselves totally to God.

We were introduced to the forms of Prayer – Vocal, Symbolic and Silent, and we discussed the various ways to pray. Vocal prayer can be spoken or sung. Symbolic prayer is prayer in which we pray with the body, using symbolic gestures like the Sign of the Cross, raising hands in praise. Silent prayer can be Meditative which is praying with the heart, and listening to God through a scripture passage; experiencing communion with God. Silent prayer can also be Contemplative where in a quiet state, with our minds at rest, we focus on God's presence. Lectio Divina or "Holy Reading" is spending time with a piece of scripture, reading, meditating, and allowing God to speak.

We also discussed the elements of traditional and spontaneous Prayer: praise, thanksgiving, supplication, intercession, and petition.

We looked at Prayer in the Old Testament. We witnessed the loving and prayerful relationship between God and His people: Abraham praying on his way to sacrifice his only son to God. We saw Hannah, silently praying to God for a son. God heard her prayer and gave her Samuel. Solomon prayed for wisdom to govern the children of Israel.

In the New Testament, Mary prayed the Magnificat. There is the Canticle of Zechariah and the Song of Simeon. When the disciples asked Jesus how to pray, he taught them "The Lord's Prayer". Jesus himself prayed to the Father while he was on the Cross.

We acknowledged that we are dependent on God for all our needs including life, and recognized the need for more than physical bread - the need for spiritual nourishment, the Eucharist. Prayer is truly God's Gift, and the Mass is the greatest prayer.

BELIEVE: The Season of "BELIEVE: Profession of Faith" began February 23rd, 2020 and ended prematurely, on March 15th, 2020 when our state/city went on 'shut-down' because of the COVID pandemic. Formation II resumed, virtually, in October.

We explored what it means to be Catholic. In the Profession of Faith - the Apostles Creed lays out what we, as Catholics believe. We saw God in our beliefs and practices starting at the Baptismal font. We reflected on the Gospels, and were challenged by them. In Matthew's Gospel, we were challenged to choose God over everything in our lives, just as the merchant finding the special pearl, sold everything he had to get it. We reflected on some of the things in our lives that we needed to give up (leave behind) in order to obtain that special **Pearl**.

CELEBRATE: The season of “CELEBRATE: Sacraments” began on February 21st, 2021, and explored how we ‘celebrate our faith in sacramental liturgy’. As the pandemic continued, so too did our virtual meetings. The first session was the ‘Liturgy: Celebrating the Paschal Mystery’ which is the life, death, resurrection and ascension of Christ. We considered the importance of liturgy in the lives of Catholics and how liturgy celebrates the Paschal Mystery which ‘established the new covenant with humanity’. (pp. 3) Liturgy refers to the public worship by and for the people of God (CCC, 1069). We recalled personal experiences when celebrating liturgy like the lighting of the Paschal Candle at the Easter Vigil evoked awe or spontaneity in us. This light which signifies “The Light of the Resurrected Christ”, serves to remind us that not only do we accompany Jesus in his Paschal Mystery, but we are accompanied by him. It is mainly through the liturgy and the sacraments that the Church is in communion with God and each other. The liturgies of the Church teach us about Jesus Christ and the meaning of the mysteries we celebrate. We are also expected to proclaim the gospel and live it out daily. As members of the Church – the Body of Christ, we participate in the liturgy in various ways - as clergy, consecrated religious, ushers, Eucharistic ministers, lectors, music ministers, altar servers and those who prepare the church and the communication media for the celebration. The liturgy is the place where we meet Christ.

Christ gave us the Sacraments to sanctify us, to deepen our faith, and to help us build our relationship with God. They are the visible, tangible signs of God’s love for us, and simultaneously channels through which we become more Christ-like. The seven sacraments are: Baptism, Confirmation, Eucharist (Sacraments of Initiation), Penance, Anointing of the Sick (Sacraments of Healing), Holy Orders and Matrimony (Sacraments of Service). In Baptism, we are born anew and become sharers in the life of God. Confirmation reaffirms what God has already given us in Baptism, deepens our baptismal life and strengthens our relationship with Christ. When we celebrate the Eucharist, we celebrate Christ’s Passover, not as a past event, but one that is present to us today. Jesus is truly present with us through the power of the Holy Spirit who consecrates and makes holy the bread and wine carried to the altar, and the people gathered in prayer. We prepare for the Eucharist by praying the Our Father and exchanging a sign of peace. After receiving the Eucharist we are called to be the bread of Christ for the world through prayer and the acts of love we show to each other.

I look forward to our next season which will begin in October when we will continue to ‘Journey through the Catechism’ to reflect on the remaining Sacraments of Healing: Penance, Anointing of the Sick, and the Sacraments of Service: Holy Orders and Matrimony.

God’s Blessings

Daisy Frankson and her *Why Catholic* group