

Pray More Lenten Retreat - Transcript

Sacrifice and Silliness: a Way to Have Both

Fr. Ethan Moore

My name is Father Ethan Moore, and this is *Ba da ba ba ba*, I'm Lentin' It. Let us pray together:

In the name of the Father, and the Son, and the Holy Spirit. Amen. Lord, we praise You for Your true gift of self to us. How You died for us, rose from the dead, and are present to us in the most Holy Eucharist. I pray Lord as we come to You, at each and every opportunity we have to receive You at the Holy Mass, that we might grow in love and devotion to Your presence here on earth. We ask Mother Mary, Mother of the Eucharist, to intercede for us, as we pray together. Hail Mary, full of grace, the Lord is with thee. Blessed art thou among women, and blessed is the fruit of thy womb, Jesus. Holy Mary, Mother of God, pray for us sinners, now and at the hour of our death. Amen. In the name for the Father, and the Son, and the Holy Spirit. Amen.

You might be asking yourself "Father Ethan, what in the world are you wearing now?" Just recently, the teachers at the school where I am the Parochial Vicar, they had asked "What could we possibly give our priest as a gift?" And knowing that it's hard to really shop for a priest, because what do they really need? I gave them something very specific. I sent an email to the teacher saying, "This is exactly what I need." And it was the man fur I'm wearing now. What a man fur allows someone like me to do is rap for you something like this:

The center, the high point, the big shebang. Jesus comes to earth, 'cause that's His thang. He feeds us His body, blood, soul, divinity. Move over Buzz Lightyear, it's beyond infinity. The mass, the mass, the mass, the mass. The mass.

We come to the church, we gather together. We are one flock like birds of a feather. We pray, we sing, we stand, we kneel. We do it all for Jesus, cause He's the real deal. The mass, the mass, the mass, the mass. The mass.

Alright, I'll take off my man fur now. I don't want you to have to endure looking at that for any longer. You know, it is the most holy sacrifice of the mass that we receive the life of Christ within us. This celebration of our faith that we have every

Pray More Lenten Retreat - Transcript

Sunday, certainly every single day, draws us into Christ as we receive Him. One perspective, as we journey with Him this Lent in the consistency of our Sunday commitment, our Sunday drawn our life into love of Him, is to enter into the mass with a childlikeness. To receive Christ as He draws us, His children, to Himself. As He said, "Let the children come to Me."

I recently read a eulogy of a daughter who was speaking on behalf of her deceased mother, and she retold a story about when she was swimming. She was a big time swimmer in high school, and this one particular morning when she had to go to swim practice at 6 in the morning, the night before, her and her brother had stayed up really, really late.

And so her mom, worried about the safety of her children, actually woke up earlier, took the kids to the swim meet, to the swim practice, drove all the way there just because of her concern and her love, her desire to protect them, drove them there, dropped them off, then drove to McDonalds, picked up some breakfast sandwiches for them, packed a cooler for them, left the keys in the car, because they had to drive to work after the swim practice, and then proceeded to run home in the rain by herself. A mother's love for her children is absolutely outstanding.

And this child, this young lady, in her humility saw her deeply devoted her mother was for her through sacrifice. The sacrifice of parents is a resemblance of the sacrifice of Jesus Christ for us in the mass. He desires to provide all the graces, all the mercy for His beloved sons and daughters. And as we come to receive Him, it is with a grateful and open heart that He can pour into us all that we could possibly need. Simply, when we enter into that with that humility of seeing how it is He nourishes us, how it is that He actually gives Himself completely to us in that holy sacrifice. The mass is the highlight, the high point of our life. It is the meal that sustains our faith, sustains everything of who we are, as we try to live in the world, but not be of the world – be people who bring Christ with us to all things.

You know, recently, I was going for a walk outside. This was later in the evening. As I left the rectory, I couldn't help but notice some children who were kind of playing in the bushes that were close to our house. And I overheard one of them say to the other one "Oh my gosh, look. These are those razzle dazzle frazzle berries I heard about." So I kind of creeped along, and I was watching them, and I just showed up there dressed as I am in my clerics, and I said "Oh, I see you've

Pray More Lenten Retreat - Transcript

found the razzle dazzle frazzle berries.” And they were kind of taken aback, like “Whoa, who is this guy? What’s going on here?”

And I noticed, as they were hesitantly backing away from me, I tried to recover. And as I was trying, one of the girls said, she said “No offense mister, but you look like the type of person that would steal children.” Yeah. Kids say the darndest things. Thankfully, after that, I was able to make a connection about ice cream flavors. And before you know it, they were doing every kind of cartwheel and gymnastic stunt they could just to show off for me, and it was a delightful experience.

You know, that child-like willingness to speak from the heart, to give from their gifts, and to enter into relationships so freely is such a witness to us all. And it is that that Christ wants for us as we encounter Him at mass, that we truly enter in a prayerful way to just offer where we’re at, to just speak to Him in the necessity of our moment, maybe the brokenness of our current situation and to just be real. And from there, to just offer Him our gifts. To say “Lord, like, here I am. I desire to put it in Your care.” And then to be ourselves in His love.

There’s nothing more freeing than just being able to be who you are without fear, without anxiety, but just living fully. And it is that which we see so clearly in children. And so Jesus draws us in the season of Lent to be not just adults, not just people who are taking themselves seriously, taking their sacrifice so seriously as they try in this... maybe a hardship or drudgery of entering into this time, but more so having that freedom of heart, that freedom of voice to be who we are in what He’s called us to in this moment in a childlike freedom, a childlike love.

And so, you know, the thing is, kids are really an inconvenience. You know, I’m just saying. They kind of smell, they get dirty a lot, they get themselves in trouble a lot, they need attention all the time, and they need constant supervision. You can tell why I ended up being a priest. Anyways, you know, but the beauty is as people who are surrounded by children – teachers, parents, adults, coaches – there is an utter joy to be able to form them, to be able to meet them where they’re at and offer service to them on their behalf. And when you take them from where they’re at, they bring you right along with them. But what that requires then is to love them in their inconvenience.

Pray More Lenten Retreat - Transcript

And I think the Lord desires this for us in all of our lives. Whether we're driving somewhere, or waiting on something, or things just don't work out the way we planned, to actually enter into that messiness and love it for what it is. Not avoid it, not be frustrated by it, not just write it off, but actually take what is inconvenient and find in that a sacrifice of joy. To actually love the fact that it is inconvenient. Certainly that is the cross.

The cross was not something that Christ would be naturally drawn to if He didn't have a heart full of love, a heart that wanted to engage the sacrifice, the inconvenience for the sake of carrying it for us, we, His children. So too do we have our own crosses. And as we bear the weight of that wood, may we do it with that childlikeness that offers a fullness of life and love in that moment of difficulty, that moment of inconvenience.

I had a wonderful opportunity a couple summers ago to serve with the Missionaries of Charity in Calcutta, India. Truly a life-changing experience. Every morning, having the mass with the sisters was such a powerhouse, and it happened at like 5:30 in the morning, so I'd try and, like, slap myself awake. And there they were just so engaged, so in love, so clear in their eyes that this was the One for whom they were made for. And they lived for that moment of reception of Him, just as a child leaps and jumps into their parents' arms fully trusting, fully vulnerable, but so free in their love. They did that at every single mass that they attended.

Then life would go from there to volunteering and working throughout the city, and I work at a childcare facility known as Diadon, where the Missionaries of Charity house young boys who have a whole variety of needs. And every day there was a celebration of life. We literally... it literally felt like a wedding every day, because we would do the YMCA at least 3 times, we would do the Macarena at least 3-5 times, and we would sing, we would dance, and we would just rejoice in the children who were there. Even if they couldn't clean up after themselves, even if they, you know, made a mess, even if they were difficult at times, the sisters had such a joy in loving them, and you could see the radiance of Christ through their witness.

Pray More Lenten Retreat - Transcript

Every single month, they would have a birthday party for all of the kids of that month. And I remember the sister in charge of the house really delighting in this. And they went all out. They don't have a lot of needs of course. They are... they take poverty very seriously. But yet they took celebration very seriously as well.

And so they decorated the whole hall, their whole building for the birthday boys. And, sure enough, they were able to acquire a pretty good size cake. And one of the sisters dimmed all the lights, and we began to sing happy birthday. And as we're singing happy birthday, the 3 boys who it was their birthdays that month, they were right by the cake, and I'll never forget the sister who was in charge there. As we're singing happy birthday, she herself dips her hand into the cake and starts to smear it on the boys' face, all of their faces. She starts a food fight. Like, a sister starting a food fight! It was the coolest thing ever!

So, so much laughter, so much joy, and so I thought, "Okay, here's my opportunity." So I went for the cake when none of the sisters were looking, I took a little bit of the icing, and I just very lightly pressed a little bit of the icing on the sister's face. And she turns around and looks at me, and with total sincerity she says to me "Thank you. Thank you." And I was like "You are such a sister." It was this beautiful, profound moment that, like, she too was childlike. She too desired to experience the same joy that she was sharing with those to whom she was contacting and giving of herself.

And for me to offer that same love, it was a communion of love. And that's truly what we're called to in our families, in our churches, and most certainly at the mass. That we enter into the communion of God's love for us like a child, and that meal that He gives in His flesh, in His blood is what we are made for. And that is joy. That is joy, life, love, and the fullness of God's gift to us. Let us pray.

In the name of the Father, and the Son, and the Holy Spirit. Amen. Lord, help us to be children after Your own heart, delighting in who You've created us to be, especially as we share in the sacrifice of the mass, receiving You in Your total gift of self. Help us to make a full gift of self back to You at every opportunity we can. Lord, You are our life and our love. Sustain us in all of our needs. We pray all of this through Your most holy and mighty name. Amen. In the name of the Father, and the Son, and the Holy Spirit. Amen.

Pray More Lenten Retreat - Transcript

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