

The Power of the Mass to Heal

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I am Father Steven Borello, director of Vocations for the Diocese of Joliet in Illinois. And I'm so glad you are joining us for the Pray More Eucharistic retreat. Today, I'd like to share with you about the power of the mass to heal and the impact it has had on my own priesthood. Before we begin, let us just take a moment, just to pray and to place ourselves in the presence of God.

Opening Prayer

In the Father Son Holy Spirit, Amen. Almighty God and Father, we give you thanks and praise for the gift of faith, for the gift of your son Jesus, for the gift of the holy sacrifice of the mass, and for the gift of the Eucharist. We ask, for your blessing upon this time and for all those who are listening, that they would experience a renewal in their faith, a deepening of their faith, a strengthening of their love, and an ever greater expectant heart for what you desire to transpire in their lives through the most holy sacrifice of the mass. We ask all of this for the intercession of Mary, Saint Joseph, Saint Michael the archangel, our guardian angels, and all the saints. In Christ Jesus' name we pray, Amen. Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, Amen.

A Reflection On The Mass

Well, first of all, I think it's so important for us to begin by just taking a moment to reflect on the mass and what happens at mass. Right? The mass is the great gift that Christ has instituted that He's given to the church, right? That catechism says at the last supper, on the night that He was betrayed, our savior instituted the eucharistic sacrifice of His body and blood. This He did in order to perpetuate the sacrifice of the cross throughout the ages until He should come again. And so to entrust His beloved spouse, the church, a memorial of His death and resurrection, a sacrament of love, a sign of unity, a bond of charity, a Pascal banquet in which Christ is consumed, the mind is filled with grace, and a pledge of future glory is given to us.

You see, what takes place at the mass is, a gift allowing you and me to once again be present to the Lord, to experience and to be with Him as He enters into Jerusalem on Palm Sunday, to walk with Him through the city as He carries His cross and to die and to see Him and to be present with Him as he dies upon Calvary's Hill, waiting in that anguishing silence of holy Saturday to experience anew the resurrection on Easter Sunday, when we receive Jesus and the Eucharist itself, the masses, this encounter with the presence of God, it is an encounter with the truth of God's goodness and God's love for us. It is an encounter with just this power, and God's desire for us to be nourished. this, this desire for us to experience, as the catechism says, a, a sign of unity, a bond of charity, a Paschal banquet in which Christ is consumed, the mind is filled with grace and a pledge of glory. Future glory is given to us.

The mass is so powerful that it can heal us of so many things, because it is the very real presence of Jesus in our lives. It is the very real presence, of Jesus. And, and He desires us to be whole, He desires to meet us in our sufferings, He desires to meet us in our weaknesses. Right, we hear from the prophet Isaiah, it was our pain that He bore, our sufferings He endured, He was pierced for our sins, crushed for in our iniquity. He bore the punishment that makes us whole. By his

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wounds, we were healed. My servant, the just one shall justify many their iniquity, he shall bear. When you and I come to the holy sacrifice of the mass, we come to encounter Jesus Christ. We bring our whole selves. We come to experience the love of God for us as we are where we are right in this moment, and this love of Jesus Christ that He has for us, the love of the Father, the love of the Holy Spirit seeks to transform us, seeks to, to fill us with grace, to bring us to this place, to draw us ever closer to Him. It is through the power of the Eucharist. It's through this experience that takes place at mass that many don't even realize how they're being healed, of the burdens that they carry, how they're being transformed, how they're being transformed from grace into grace.

And, and the reality is that the mass is this profound balm on our soul. Right, all of us experience hardship. All of us experience heartache, all of us experience pain and suffering and trial and tribulation. We all experience these things and if we're attentive, when we come to the mass and we bring ourselves to the mass, oftentimes when we leave, we often notice that, that there is something now that is, that is holding us up. We are no longer carrying this on our own, but rather the Lord Himself is doing this for us. The Lord Himself is, is supporting us. The Lord Himself is the one who is strengthening us. The Lord Himself is the one who is now carrying the burdens that we brought to mass that morning.

And He is the one who brings them to His cross, who unites them with His own passion, death and resurrection, placing them before the Father. And in Him, when we receive Him in holy communion, we ourselves are given that profound truth, that our prayers have been heard, and that He is strengthening us now to walk and to carry the crosses that each one of us have been entrusted with, right, for we are reminded, right, That he calls to us, come to you all who are weary, right? Come to Him, come to Him, right? He, just calls us to Him because His burden is not burdensome.

In fact, it's incredibly gentle and it's perfectly shaped for you and for me, when we come to the mass, we bring our whole selves, as I said, and, and our whole experience, and we are asked by God to make a gift of ourselves, to place ourselves before Him, to bring to Him what we carry, to bring to Him and to place on the altar all that we carry our sufferings, infirmities, our worries, our anxieties, our sins, our failings, our shortcomings, our joys, our hopes, our desires, our longings, our gratitudes, our thanksgivings, our praise, our worship. To allow Him to offer all of this as a fragrant offering to the Father.

And the beauty is, is that we receive Christ Himself. And when we receive Christ Himself, and that amen that we make before we receive Him, and the priest says the body of Christ, and we say, amen. What ends up happening in our hearts and our souls is we say, yes, I believe that this is really, truly the body, blood, soul, and divinity of Jesus. And not only do I believe that, but I accept everything that God has for me in this moment. I accept this living, this living gift of his very, very being, this very body, blood, soul, and divinity into myself so that He can transform me, right?

When you and I eat normal food, we transform normal food into ourselves and, and it becomes part of us, right? But when we receive Jesus in the Eucharist, He transforms us to be more like Himself, to be more like He is. He, he helps us so that we can receive more and more the gift and

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the love of the Father and the reception of the most holy and sacred gift that which is the catechism of the Catholic church states that the Eucharist is this efficacious sign and sublime cause of that communion in the divine life, right? And this is the beauty of it, that we receive Him into this place, and as we receive Him into this place, we're changed. Well, that's the hope, right? But as we say that on man, we give him the permission to say, okay, Jesus, like, do what you're going to do and, and make within me this power of change. And so when we go to the mass, we bring something to mass, and the Lord wants to take, wants to minister to us in that place. He wants to give us the graces that we need either to carry our sufferings, better or to really truly to redeem some of them and transform some of them, and heal some of them, especially those that, that he Himself has deemed are the ones that He really wants to heal.

Come To Mass Prepared And With An Open Heart

And so, what are we supposed to do? Like how are we supposed to approach this most holy sacrifice of the mass? Well, I think the first way we have to approach, it's honestly. Like we come to the mass preparing to be healed, right? Preparing to be transformed, preparing to let grace do its thing, right? We come to mass saying, okay, Jesus, like, I believe that you are truly and really present here, that you instituted this on holy Thursday, and that you have called me to participate and celebrate in this, this holy sacrifice of the mass to give worship to your Father, to my father, to our father, and to allow this gift of your grace and your love to heal and transform you wherever it is needed, right? Because sin is, is an illness. Sin is something that poisons us, that weakens us, that strips us of our dignity and of our worth, and the Eucharist and the love of God, and the sacramental life, and the life of prayer and the gift of grace, right? All, all of these things transform us and heal us and, and bring us ever closer to the, to the, to the heart of the Father, right?

All of these things are, are the balm, right? The balm of Gilead that just as it comes upon us, we are being healed as it comes upon us being transformed from grace into grace, right? And so what we're invited to bring to mass, right, is ourselves as we are acknowledging this, right? That's right. At the very beginning of mass, we have to acknowledge our sinfulness. We have to acknowledge where we fall short of the mark. We have to acknowledge where we've missed the mark. We have to acknowledge where we ourselves have been self-reliant or, self-justifying self-centered or, have been, really just, seeking ourselves, right? And trying to control and, and to take control of things and to protect ourselves rather than to open ourselves and avail ourselves to the love of God and the grace of God. And to say, Jesus like, I need you. Jesus saved me. Jesus, you're the only one, right? You're the only one who can, who can heal me. Like I have no control over life, Lord, like you are the only one who's, who's in control of life in this world. And so Lord, I avail myself to you, right?

And so I think that when people approach the mass, we forget this, we forget that we have to come with these hearts that are open, right? And maybe you've experienced difficulty and struggle and your heart's not there, and that's okay. Just tell that to Jesus, right? Because that in and of itself is a very open heart.

Addressing Poor Assumptions

So I want to acknowledge just a couple of the poor assumptions. Sometimes we come to mass with, for the reason that the Lord, hasn't healed us for the reason that the Lord hasn't transformed us, for the reason that the Lord isn't, hasn't done what we think He should do, right? So the first one is, that pride, right? I think the Lord, I think I know what the Lord should do, and the Lord has other plans, right? And so we have to be really attentive to pride and to give Jesus that permission to do exactly what He intends to do, and say, 'Lord, okay, like, you know what's best for me? I don't, so I give you this permission.'

Now, I think the second thing we want to say is that, we can, believe this lie that I, that I just don't have enough faith. If I had more faith, Lord would do this. Well, that is a lie in itself, right? Faith is a gift, and faith is something that is, is gifted to us. And so the Lord, the Lord's not going to punish us, right, The Lord's not going to do something because our faith is lacking. Because we can always say, we can always say like, Lord, I believe, help my unbelief, Lord, I believe you can do this. Help me let you do this. And so we want to be honest with Jesus about this, right? We don't want to, to try to make this something else, but we want to really just be honest like, Lord, like, I need you to heal me. I need you to save me. I need you, to redeem me. And, that's what the Lord wants to do, right? But it's not dependent on, on my faith, right, It's, it's dependent on what is for my good, and what is for the good of the church, for my salvation, It's dependent on so many other things, right? Than just my faith.

So it's not I can't have no faith, right? I can't be like, Lord, I don't believe this is possible. You can't do this, but I can say, 'Lord, I believe that anything is possible. I just don't know how you're going to do it, but I ask that you would do this for me.' The second thing is, that, you know, there's this lie that sometimes we hear, I need to try harder, do more. I did something wrong. I didn't do something right, and so I'm being punished. Right? The Lord doesn't, the Lord doesn't do that. Like the Lord is not out there to punish us. And, and it's not about us doing more, rather, it oftentimes it's simply about us, us acknowledging we, we can't do more, and that we need the Lord to save us. And it's this posture of humility and almost this desperation. Like, I'm desperate for the Lord to do this. I'm desperate for the Lord to meet me in this place of need. And I just avail my heart to Him. I open my heart to Him, and I say, Jesus, like, you are God. Right?

And oftentimes we want to, like, we want to see, a physical healing, right? We want to see a physical healing, because we can see that. But what the Lord most often does, is that He heals first the soul, He heals the heart, He heals the mind. And sometimes He makes known physical healings. And the last one, I think is a poor assumption. Sometimes if I were only holier, then something would happen. I'm too broken or sinful, for God to heal me, and, that's not true either, right? Because the reality is, that Christ came to redeem all. So none of us is too sinful to be healed. None of us is too sinful to be redeemed.

So we would just want to make sure that that's there, that you just say, okay, Lord, like I didn't know I believed that Lord, that I'm too sinful for you to do something. Help me to renounce that. Help me to give that back to you so I can accept the truth, Lord, that you are all powerful here, that you can do this. And or that lie that if I were holier, well, what is holiness? Right, it really is that measure in which our lives are set apart for the Lord. It's that relationship with Jesus, right?

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So it's not something that we, ourselves, can measure, right? Because you look at the saints, the closer they are to the Lord, the more they recognize how far away they are from Him. So I always just say, it's like, well, it's not about if I was holier, it's can I just be more dependent? Can I just say, Lord, like, help me let you be more in me and me less, and to let the Lord meet me there? So a couple of things, right, that we want to remember to prepare ourselves for the mass, right? We want to be open to whatever God has planned, right? Every time we go to mass, like we always want to bring to Him our whole hearts, our whole beings, and be open to whatever He has planned.

The Importance of Forgiveness

The second thing is we want to take seriously that invitation, as I said earlier, to acknowledge our sins and ask for forgiveness and to forgive others, right? Because unforgiveness is one of the greatest blocks in the heart to, to the movements of God, because unforgiveness hardens the heart. And so, I just want to encourage you, even as I'm talking, if there's somebody that pops into your mind that you need to forgive, ask Jesus to help you, to forgive them and for what they did to you, right? And maybe it's yourself, right? Then ask Jesus to help you forgive yourself as He is, as you've been forgiven within in the sacrament of reconciliation, right? Like, to accept that forgiveness of God so that, that you can really live in the freedom and the truth that the Lord has forgiven you, and that these sins are wiped away, you know?

The Power Of The Mass

And two, remember that we want to remember thirdly, that spiritual healing always comes first. The Lord always wants to heal us spiritually so that our hearts can be more and more His. and sometimes the physical healing takes place, but it's almost always spiritual first, right? I can't tell you the number of times, as I said, I, I've come to mass with, with just like a heaviness on my heart or, or discouragement in my soul. And I come to mass, I just place that before mass and I receive Jesus in the Eucharist, and like the answer is given to me, right? People don't always think of that as a healing, but that really is a profound healing that took place in the sacrifice of the mass for me, because the Lord mediated right to my need, right? To that place in which I was struggling. And, lastly, it's like we want to ask to believe, right? We want to ask for the grace to believe that the Lord is healing something. And this is the beauty of it. The catechism reminds us what material food produces in our bodily life, Holy communion wonderfully achieves in our spiritual life.

So in our bodily life, food gives us strength and nourishment to, to be able to, to go forward, to live life, right? Holy Communion gives us that strength, that nourishment to grow in our divine life, to be able to, to proclaim and to call upon God more wholeheartedly, more completely, more totally. Because what it does is it helps us to move away from sinfulness and helps us to move closer from venial sins, and helps us and purifies the mind and the heart, and our stories of those venial sins so that we ourselves can be more apt to love our neighbor more perfectly and holy and completely. It's just so good, like what the mass, what the mass does for us, like how, how the Lord meets us there, and how we come to the Lord to worship Him, how we come to the Lord to praise Him, and how we give thanks to God. Because we know the power of the mass, we know that this is the body, blood, soul, and divinity of Jesus who is present to us, that Him on

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the cross, right? That it's this beautiful gift of Himself to us. And, and we come to the mass, Lord, we make that gift back to Him. And as we make the gift and we receive His gift, right? That love that's right there in the mass heals. And that's what Jesus wants, right? He wants to heal us.

Encounters Of Healing In The Mass

And so I just want to share with you a couple of the experiences, that I've seen in my own priesthood, right? I mentioned one earlier, just of just some of the emotional things, the emotional healing that I've experienced, right? Well, I was at a conference and, this was a number of years ago, and at the conference, we just talked about how the Lord really, desires to heal people.

And so we were invited to ask to pray with another person and ask the Lord to heal them of something that they brought forward. And I saw some amazing things that day. And then I thought, you know, what I should preach about or, or should share, right? This, this coming Sunday for the baptism of the Lord, I should share about how our baptism gives us access to call upon God and to ask the Lord to heal us, to ask the Lord for that grace to heal, to redeem, to transform what, what is maybe lacking right? In us, and to, restore it to the fullness of health, right? And so I begin this mass, well, I should say, like, what did I see as some of these things I shared at that, at this mass was I shared how my friend's rotator cuff was healed.

How, another one of my friends, their son's finger was, was just disfigured. And we prayed over it. And, you know, nothing, we didn't see anything happen that day, but he came back the next day and his finger was totally healed. And, and you're like, what, what is this? there were people who had hearing aids, and there was just a number of people who had left this conference with a pile of hearing aids, right? Right.

By the baptismal font. As we were leaving, there was a pile of hearing aids from people whose hearing had been restored or healed to such a degree that they no longer felt the need for the hearing aid. I saw one of our seminarians, when I was there, It just, uh, an injury to his growing that had caused him to limp for, for months was just miraculously healed. He had walked in limping, he left being able to run and sprint and, and do these jumps. And I almost had a heart attack because I was watching him do it. but like, it was like unbelievable that, how the Lord healed them.

Healing of Hearing

And so I'm sharing all this at mass, and after mass, a woman came up to me and she said, father, would you pray for me? I'm to totally deaf, so I'm praying over her. I ask for her name, she can't hear me. I'm praying over her asking Jesus to heal her through the Eucharist that she has received and the power of the Eucharist she has received. You know, I'm doing all this stuff right, and nothing happens. Nothing happens. I'm actually kind of embarrassed. So I get a phone call from the deacon, that Monday as I'm driving back from where I was at, and the deacon said, father, you remember that woman you prayed over who was deaf? I said, yeah, I do actually. And he said, well, father, she was at Mass this morning, and during the Eucharistic prayer, she just started to cry. And after mass, she came up to us sobbing. And she said, she said to us, you

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know, this was the first time I've heard the mass in five years, and I had to turn down my hearing aid because it was so loud. And the deacon and I on the phone, I'm just, I'm shocked right on the phone as I'm driving on the highway, and I'm just shocked. And the deacon, and the deacon was too, and we just gave praise to God for like what He did. How through the Eucharist that she had received, like the Lord just healed her of that, right? It wasn't a complete healing, because she still needed the hearing aid, but it was a healing to the point where she could actually hear the mass again.

Healing of the Knee

So I shared this story at another parish and, a few months later, and this woman comes up to me after mass, and she looks at me and she goes, father, like I have to tell you, like when I heard your story, I said, sure, you know, but then during the Eucharistic prayer, all of a sudden my knee started to burn. I could just feel this intense, this intense heat in my knee. And, and I just said, Lord, Lord, do whatever you want to do. And so and so here I was, I was just feeling this intensity in my knee. And the next thing I know, father, it's like I felt this urge to kneel during, the Eucharistic prayer. And I knelt, and Father, I stood, father you don't understand though, like I tore my meniscus three years ago. And after I tore my meniscus, I haven't been able to kneel. I haven't been able to guard, and I haven't been able to pray as I used to pray. Father look. And she's going up and down and up and down and up and down, and she's genuflecting and she goes, father, I couldn't do this when I was 20 or 30. Like, father, this is, this is amazing. And so here we are, like it stopped our mass. Both of us are just crying at what the Lord had done and just like, so grateful to God. And we just gave thanks, and we praised the Lord, and we just thanked Him. We just said, Lord, that it would continue to heal.

Healing of the Limp

And then I shared these two stories at another parish, and man walked up to me afterwards and he said, father, I'm be honest with you, okay? I was walking up for communion, still limping, and thinking to myself, Jesus, like, what the heck? Like, I've hurt my knee, or I hurt my leg for three months. Nobody knows what's wrong, I can't walk, I can't do anything. And like, Lord, what are you going to do for me? He goes, father, I realized when I got back to my pew that I wasn't limping anymore. And he looked at me and he goes, father, you know, I've never been a man of deep faith. Why would God do this for me? I looked at him, I said, I don't know, but can we give thanks to Him for it? Can we praise Him for it? Because obviously He wanted to do this for you and needed it through the power of the Eucharist, without anybody laying hands on you, without anybody praying over you, just simply through this holy sacrifice of the mass, did he heal your limp. And these are just a couple of the real simple ones. There's, there's so many more that I have. there's so many more that I have that haven't yet come to total fruition.

The Start of Healing

Like there was one that I was at a parish in Phoenix, and I was just praying in this. We, I just shared all these stories at Mass. And this woman, after Mass was a paraplegic. And she looked at me and she goes, father, the doctor said five years ago that maybe I'd walk again. And I kept believing in the Lord that you do something. But I haven't felt anything in any part of my lower

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body for five years. Father, then all of a sudden during the Eucharistic prayer, and especially when I received communion, I felt these bolts of energy shooting through my body. Father, I have faith that God has begun some work in me, and I just ask that you'd pray that He'd bring it to completion. I'd be able to walk again. And we just prayed like we just prayed, right? But again, it was just this really beautiful gift that was through the Eucharistic prayer. It was through this, the sacrifice of the mass that these people found healing, that they found that the Lord did some marvelous work in their lives. And not only for these, these physical healings, right, that were taking place, but, but there were so many people who were spiritually healed of something of, of a place of un forgiveness, a place of bitterness, a place of, of anger, a place of shame, a place of, of embarrassment. And the Lord just said, allow me, allow me now to take that and place, place the love of my son for you in that place. And I can't tell you the number of people who experience healing just by being so vulnerable and vulnerable with the Lord.

So the next time you go to mass, I want to invite you to pray for your own healing, to pray for the healing of a friend, to pray for the healing of a child, to simply pray and to worship God with all your mind and all your heart, and all your strength, and all your soul, so that whatever happens, you and I will lift up our hearts and praise and thanksgiving to the Lord, to the Father, to the Son, and the Holy Spirit, and that we ourselves would allow ourselves to be transformed by His love.

Closing Prayer

The Lord be with you. May the love of the Lord in his most blessed sacrament bring you healing of mind, body, heart, and soul, and lead you into the joy of the heavenly kingdom. And may Almighty God bless you, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, Amen. God bless.