

Saint Leo the Great Catholic Church

Very Reverend Justin L. Ward, S.T.L, Administrator

February 7, 2021 **The Fifth Sunday in Ordinary Time Year B**

Lenten Pilgrimage

The parish will be offering a Lenten pilgrimage to the Shrine of the Most Blessed Sacrament and the Ave Maria Grotto. The group will depart the morning of March 6 and arrive back in Demopolis that evening. The cost for expenses as reduced to \$15, however this should not be a barrier for someone who wishes to attend. The facilities will be large and social distancing measures will be taken. There are still some open slots available so please sign up if you are interested!

Lector Schedule

	8:00AM	10:00AM
February 7	Marti Waters	Brian Sellers
February 14	Diane Brooker	Joe Veres

Ash Wednesday Masses

Ash Wednesday Masses will be on Wednesday, February 17 at 6:30 AM and 8 AM.

Liturgical Posture in the Hall

The General Instruction of the Roman Missal (GIRM) no. 21 requires that, “people should kneel at the Consecration unless prevented by a lack of space, large numbers, or other reasonable cause.” While you are certainly free to kneel as you are able, the law makes it clear that it is equally permissible to remain standing if there is a reasonable cause. Some may rightly judge the awkwardness of our temporary arrangement in the parish hall to be just such a reasonable cause. While both postures are legitimate in various parts of the world, the United States Bishops have made kneeling our norm for the sake of liturgical unity. However, as referenced above, reasonable provisions are nevertheless made for temporary circumstances such as the ones we find ourselves in. What is not appropriate is to simply sit for the Eucharistic prayer out of convenience.

How is this News?

As of this week I have now been officially gifted with no less than four copies of Taylor Marshall’s *Infiltration*. In kind of a humorous way, it caused me to reflect on just why so many want to do their part to make sure that priests “know what’s really going on in the Church.” Months ago I read the book with interest, but I confess, I didn’t discover anything new.

Dr. Marshall’s book “exposes” nefarious influences in the contemporary Catholic Church. He lines up the predictable suspects: Freemasons, Modernists, Communists, the Mafia, International bankers etc. etc. It is true that these various groups have got us in the present bad place. I know that all of you probably know someone, if not you yourselves, who have dipped into the social media platforms of the “traditionalist movement” where you surely encountered a mix of conspiracy theories, anti-Vatican II criticism, bitter disparagement of the Ordinary Form of the Mass and condemnation of every pope since Pius XII combined with slapdash theology, quotes out of context, reliance on rumor, hearsay, apparitions, and unapproved end times prognostications.

People love this tabloid fodder and always have. But the truth is that if you get deep into Church history, you will realize that in every age we have not only had corruption and immorality within the Church and persecution from without, but we have also had prophets of doom, apocalyptic visionaries, conspiracy theorists, purveyors of prophecies, gossips and sensationalists. (Continued on next page)

1/31/21 St. Leo \$2,328.00

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It is a fact that the Catholic Church has been “infiltrated” by a host of sinners. Because the Church has always been made up of humans. For over 20 centuries now, nefarious influences intent on world domination have almost certainly been meeting in secret to set up a long-term plan to bring about the “takeover” of the Catholic Church. So, my question for so many today is, how this is news? The Church has always conflicted with the powers of darkness. Satan has tried to penetrate the Church from the beginning. Judas was his first secret agent, and Jesus assumed this conflict when he said the gates of hell would not prevail against the Church. Since the fall of Adam, it has simply been the way the world works. Rich, powerful people have *always* met together to plan how they can make sure they will always be in control. That is what rich, powerful people do. To lose control is what they fear most. That is certainly no secret to any of us.

Folks work against the Church by using their influence to pursue lives of pleasure, power, and prosperity up until the very present day. But if we turn to the scriptures, we see that this reality is actually a rich seam running through the whole story of salvation. Consider the whole story of the Old Testament. It is exactly this! I concede that it is worthwhile from time to time to have the corruption, deceit, manipulation and immorality “exposed.” This is especially important when, for the last fifty or sixty years we have been living in a kind of sentimentalized, churchy la-la land where every priest is “Father Fabulous”, and we go to church to “Sing a New Church” into being and talk about how there was “only one set of footprints because that’s where Jesus carried us.” Regrettably, we are all too prone to view our Church through rose colored lenses. So, I agree that a dose of reality can be healthy from time to time. Pointing out the problems can help us spiritual warriors.

However, in this time of pandemic and social uncertainty, these infatuations can have the tendency to throw red meat to disgruntled traditionalists. It is more likely to feed our need to blame other people for the world’s problems and forget to criticize ourselves. In other words, conspiracy theories feed self-righteousness and our tendency to shift blame to shadowy figures far away. This is not good. And it is really not good for the soul. With my whole heart, I am convinced that the larger cultural truth about modern history is that the Catholic Church is going through a long transition from being one of the pre-eminent institutions of Western culture—with all the attendant personal complacency, ossification, and worldly complicity—to re-engaging the world in terms of authentic Christian mission. It was just this problem that Pope Saint John XXIII called the Second Vatican Council to consider under the heading of “renewal”, and it is just this transition which Pope Saint Paul VI and Pope Saint John Paul II tried to effect against all odds of quick success. As a mentor of mine put it, “we’re in a sixteenth century situation.” The sixteenth century was a time of enormous and astonishing upheaval and transition. We should study that century. It is phenomenal. Individuals of both genius and madness combined with political and economic turmoil— and added to it philosophical, theological, demographic, and technological facets for a perfect storm. The Church was in the midst of it and the barque of Peter was tossed about as any ship in the midst of a tempest.

No doubt that we are in such a state now, and it is understandable that during such times people become upset and go all “apocalyptic.” Their world is upset. The borders of the comfort zones have been breached. As promised by Christ, something new will be born and we are groaning in labor to give birth. Conspiracy theories, blaming others and retreating into a little fortress of our own making are classic responses to the threat of overwhelming change. It is understandable. But it is not acceptable. And it is certainly not the “traditional” response.

In the face of such conspiracy theories, the faithful Catholic should be asking, “So what am I going to do about it?” Yes. I know it sounds patronizing, but it’s an honest question: “So what are you going to do about it?” Go ahead and complain and vent if you must, but then get over it. Build a life rooted in God. Build a family. Build a parish. Build a business. Build a school. Do not fret about things you can do nothing about. Life is short and eternity is long, and this is an exciting time for the Church and the world. Pray more, roll up your sleeves and get busy serving God and serving others. God love you. -Fr. Ward

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