



ENCOUNTERING JESUS IN THE EUCHARIST

Disciples Called To Worship

A Pastoral Letter from
Bishop David L. Ricken, DD, JCL



Diocese of
Green Bay

Executive Summary of “Encountering Jesus in the Eucharist: Disciples Called To Worship” by Bishop David L. Ricken

**A Pastoral Letter to the Priests, Deacons,
Religious & Lay Faithful of the
Diocese of Green Bay**

Background

“Encountering Jesus in the Eucharist: Disciples Called To Worship” is the title of a new pastoral letter written by Bishop David L. Ricken. A pastoral letter is an open letter to the people of a diocese and offers instruction and guidance about a particular matter. “Encountering Jesus in the Eucharist: Disciples Called To Worship” invites the Diocese of Green Bay into a greater appreciation for Jesus in the Eucharist. This is the fourth pastoral letter written by Bishop Ricken since he became bishop of the Diocese of Green Bay in 2008.

This pastoral letter is written in seven parts as follows:

Part I – Overview of Our Diocesan Discipleship Journey

Part II – Disciples Called To Worship

Part III – Unlocking the Meaning of the Mass

Part IV – Overview of the Structure of the Mass

Part V – Rediscovering the Power and Beauty of the Mass

Part VI – “Five Alive” Practices To Live the Mass

Part VII – Sent Forth as Disciples on Mission

This executive summary will provide a brief overview of the seven parts of the pastoral letter and includes direct quotations from Bishop Ricken. You can read the entire letter in English and Spanish on the Diocese of Green Bay’s website: www.gbdioc.org.

Part One: Overview of Our Diocesan Discipleship Journey

In part one, Bishop Ricken reviews the diocesan journey that we have been taking together and provides an overview of where we are going in the next few years. He situates this journey within the process of discipleship which calls all people to “Discover Jesus, Follow Jesus, Worship Jesus and Share Jesus.” A disciple is anyone who wants to be a friend and follower of Jesus. Bishop Ricken reminds us that a Catholic disciple “loves the Mass and engages in worship every Sunday. The Mass is the liturgy of heaven anticipated and entered into with every Mass on earth.” He notes that we must fulfil the mission, given by Jesus, to go forth, to preach the Gospel to all nations and baptize them “in the name of the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit” (Matthew 28:18-20).

Bishop Ricken then explains that this pastoral letter is to help us enter more deeply into the Worship Jesus years which also coincide with the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops’ (USCCB) three-year initiative called the “Eucharistic Revival” which is also centered on the Eucharist. The aim of the Eucharistic Revival is to encourage a movement of Catholics across the United States, healed, converted, formed and unified by an encounter with Jesus in the Eucharist – and sent out in mission for the life of the world. In the Diocese of Green Bay Bishop, Bishop Ricken notes that “we will be implementing this priority in addition to other facets of our Worship Jesus years as we learn to know and cherish the treasure that is the Mass by focusing on the presence of Christ in Word and Sacrament. During these Worship Jesus years, we will strive to undertake a journey to become parishes centered on the Eucharist so that all may come to greater devotion to God our Father and his most beloved Son, Jesus Christ, through the power of the Holy Spirit.”

Part Two: Disciples Called To Worship

In part two of his pastoral letter, Bishop Ricken turns his attention to the importance of Sunday and asks all of us to place the highest priority on attending Sunday Mass. He says that “the greatest prayer of all is Mass, and Sunday Mass is that special day of the week when the whole community comes together to give honor and glory and praise to God.” Bishop Ricken emphasizes that partaking in the Eucharist “is the most intimate way in which Jesus Christ is present to us, because he himself is the sacrament. He is fully present in the Eucharist. Every time we participate in the celebration of the Eucharist, we renew our belief in the truth that Christ gave his very life for each one of us. By receiving Jesus Christ himself, we are able to become more and more like him.” Bishop Ricken reminds us that because we place such an importance on Mass that we need to be mindful of those who are no longer regularly coming to Mass. Bishop asks us all to “invite our family members and friends to return to active practice of the faith by attending Sunday Mass.”

Part Three: Unlocking the Meaning of the Mass

Bishop Ricken begins part three of his pastoral letter by defining the word “worship.” He says that “worship is right honor, praise and thanksgiving to God which we do through the public prayer of the Church – liturgy – and in our private prayer. The Mass is the perfect act of worship, offered by the Son to the Father in the Holy Spirit. We can (and we should) pray in many different ways, but only in the Mass can we offer the prayer of perfect praise and thanksgiving that we owe to God.” He then outlines five thematic keys that open up the Mass to our deeper understanding.

These keys are:

- The Mass as Paschal Sacrifice
- The Mass as Heaven on Earth
- The Mass as the Greatest Act of Gratitude
- The Mass as a “School of Thanksgiving”
- The Mass as a Sacrament of Communion and Charity

Bishop Ricken invites us to deeper reflection through these five keys so that we can acknowledge the source from whom all blessings flow – God, our Father. He notes that “every day is a gift. Every breath is a new gift to us; the use of each of our senses is a gift. For all these we give thanks in the Mass. God promises none of us the next day or even the next breath.” With the importance of the Mass firmly established, Bishop Ricken then moves to solidify this foundation through an explanation of the structure of the Mass.

Part Four: Overview of the Structure of the Mass

In this next section, Bishop Ricken provides a comprehensive overview of the parts and structure of the Mass so we can appreciate the “why” behind the “what.” He explains the origins and symbolism that undergird each part of the Mass. The Mass is divided into two parts: the Liturgy of the Word and the Liturgy of the Eucharist. Bishop notes that these have different and complementary purposes. In the Liturgy of the Word, the faithful are instructed from the books of Sacred Scripture. In the Liturgy of the Eucharist, the Church celebrates the rite established by Jesus at the Last Supper – the sacrificial offering of his Body and Blood.

The Liturgy of the Word includes the introductory rites and the readings and homily. The Liturgy of the Eucharist includes the preparation of the gifts, the Eucharistic Prayer and the Communion Rite. The final words of the Mass in Latin are “*Ite, missa est.*” – which, roughly translated, are “Go, it is sent.” Bishop states that “from *missa* we derive many other English words, and all of them are relevant: Mass, dis-missal, mission, commission. By calling its supreme form of ritual prayer ‘the Mass,’ the Church tells us that we are fortified by Bread of Angels in order to do the work of Christ in the world. We are sent out to evangelize our neighbors and sanctify the world through our work. In our thoughts and our actions, we must bring heaven to earth, just as Jesus does in the Mass.” He then urges us to share our love of Jesus in the Mass with others with the words “we have no time to waste!”

Part Five: Rediscovering the Power and Beauty of the Mass

In this section, Bishop Ricken invites us to focus our hearts and minds on how to pray the Mass, how to love the Mass and how to more intentionally live the Mass – in our homes. This section is marked by his appeal to each one of us to rediscover the power and beauty of the Mass so that we can share this gift with others. The entire text from this section includes these important words from Bishop Ricken:

“My brothers and sisters, if you had been the only person who ever lived, Jesus still would have died on the cross for you; just for you. All because of his great love for you, Jesus still would have celebrated the Supper of the Lamb, endured the passion of the bloody death on the cross and risen from the dead, just for you! During these Worship Jesus years, I encourage each and every one of you, whether in leadership as a priest or pastor, or a deacon or pastoral leader, parishioner or liturgical minister, or as an individual, or a husband or wife, a single person or married couple, as a family, young or old, child or adolescent, I invite all of you to discover personally the love of Jesus for you, expressed perfectly in the sacrifice and the celebration of the Holy Mass.

I invite you to discover, perhaps for the first time, or to re-discover the beauty of the Mass as the re-entry into the mystery of this greatest of loves. Jesus celebrated the first Mass with his disciples on Holy Thursday evening, the night before his passion, death on the cross and resurrection from the dead. It is through all of this that he left the great legacy of the Mass as our point of entry into this great and terrible beauty of the sacrifice and celebration of the Mass, the Lord’s Supper. To know the Mass is very critical to understanding this mystery more deeply. My invitation to each and every one of you is to enter into the Mass, whether daily and/or every Sunday, more deeply and with greater intentionality.”

Bishop Ricken reminds us in this section that all Catholics are obligated to attend Mass every Sunday and on certain other holy days specified by the Church and that good preparation is essential to experience the power and beauty of the Mass.

Part Six: “Five Alive” Practices To Live the Mass

As Bishop Ricken continues to guide us in mining the treasures of the Mass, he lists “Five Alive” practices to help us come truly alive in our Catholic faith. They are:

1. Mass
2. Lectio Divina (praying the Scriptures)
3. Eucharistic Adoration
4. Confession
5. The Rosary

He outlines the importance of Mass and the necessity of being properly disposed in order to receive Mass. Bishop Ricken emphasizes that “it is an obligation which carries the weight of serious sin to miss Mass on Sunday. If you have missed Sunday Mass, please bring this to confession before your next Sunday Mass. Also, do try to go another day or two if possible. It can be a very different experience – quieter and more focused.” He then walks us through the ancient process of lectio divina which is a way of praying the Scriptures that opens us up to what God is saying to us through his Holy Word. Eucharistic Adoration is the next “Five Alive” practice. In the most basic terms, Eucharistic Adoration is the worship of the Eucharist outside of the Mass. The Eucharistic Host is displayed in a monstrance on the altar so that all can see and pray in the presence of Jesus. Bishop Ricken asks that there would be prayers offered for an increase of vocations every hour of every day. He calls “for a renewed commitment from our Eucharistic Adoration chapels to be open and available to all.” The last two “five alive” practices include a renewed focus on confession and a call for us all to pray the rosary.

Part Seven: Sent Forth as Disciples on Mission

In the last section, Bishop Ricken urges us to go out and share our Catholic faith with others as disciples on mission. He indicates that there will be challenges ahead of us but that with the Holy Spirit and the Blessed Mother, we can be assured that our efforts will be blessed and fruitful. Bishop Ricken then recounts a story of when he met Pope Francis with the bishops of Region VII (Illinois, Indiana and Wisconsin). During this time, he shared with the Holy Father the progress we are making in an effort to build a culture of missionary discipleship in the Diocese of Green Bay. Bishop Ricken notes that Pope Francis “encouraged me (and us) to ‘lean into the Holy Spirit,’ listening for where the Spirit is guiding us. He also said that we need to remember it is not so much that we bring the Holy Spirit to others; the Holy Spirit is already there. We simply help the people realize how close God is to them already.”

So, with this encouragement from Pope Francis, Bishop Ricken urges us to entrust ourselves to the Holy Spirit and the intercession of our Blessed Mother, Mary of the Eucharist. He notes that “in learning how to love the Mass and to worship God the Father from whom all blessings flow, the Blessed Mother serves as our witness and guide. Mary, Mother of the Eucharist, teach us to love the Eucharist, as much as you love your son, Jesus, and his body, the Catholic Church.”

Bishop Ricken concludes his pastoral letter entrusting all of our efforts to Our Lady of Good Help, who is so present to us in the Diocese of Green Bay. He then lists the following saints as a source of guidance and prayer for us during this time:

St. Peter Julian Eymard, Apostle of the Eucharist, pray for us.

St. Norbert, Apostle of the Eucharist, pray for us.

St. Clare of Assisi, pray for us.

Blessed Columba Marmion, pray for us.

St. Manuel González García, pray for us.

Blessed Carlo Acutis, pray for us.

St. Elizabeth of the Trinity, pray for us.

Want to learn more?

Bishop Ricken is encouraging all parishes in the Diocese of Green Bay to enter more deeply into the Worship Jesus years through a greater focus and study on the Mass. If you are interested in learning more about the Mass, you can read Bishop Ricken’s entire pastoral letter on the Diocese of Green Bay’s website at www.gbdioc.org. A companion study guide has been created by the Discipleship & Parish Life Mission Team for use individually and by parishes. You can request this study guide by emailing the Office of Divine Worship at divineworship@gbdioc.org.

