

2nd Sunday of Lent (A)

March 1, 2026

“The Mass”

The Catholic week can be summed up in a simple saying that comes from the East: “After ecstasy, the laundry.” The “ecstasy” is Sunday Mass, the weekly Catholic mountaintop experience of the glory of Christ, our personal Tabor, if you will. The “laundry” is our regular weekly activities, including getting dressed, preparing for work, getting children off to school, shopping, shoveling, cleaning, organizing, and, yes, the dreaded laundry duty!

Both experiences are essential to a full life. Without ecstasy, we lack the wisdom, inspiration, and spiritual strength to bring Christ into the world; without laundry, life is utopia, but not rooted in reality. We have to worship and we have to work.

The neglect of weekly ecstasy, the holy sacrifice of the Mass, is a serious problem, and one we have wrestled with for decades. For some, it may be boring. But, as one author put it: “People of all places and times have found [Mass] to be the life-transforming centerpiece of their spiritual lives” (Kelly, 69).

Perhaps a renewed understanding of the Mass can bring the Eucharist to life. Let’s look at a few parts and their deeper meaning.

From the dawn of civilization, people have worshipped God through sacrifice. From Abel, Abraham, and Melchizedek in the Old Testament to the priests and the mysterious magi in the New Testament, people have publicly expressed adoration and love of God through the offering of precious gifts.

The greatest gift ever given by God to the human race was the gift of His own Divine Son. Jesus, on the night before he died, gave something no person had ever given, the gift of himself. “This is my Body. This is my Blood.” The Mass continues this same sacrifice, completed on Calvary and continuing in our day.

At the beginning of Mass, we say **the Penitential Act**. “Lord, have mercy . . . Christ, have mercy . . . Lord, have mercy.” “This is the moment when we acknowledge that some of our thoughts, word, and actions have not helped us become the best-version of ourselves” (Kelly, 79). This act forgives venial, or minor

sins. It is not Confession, which takes away mortal sin, but it prepares the heart to receive Word and Sacrament.

The Scripture readings form and inform our minds and hearts. This weekend, Abram places trust in God's promise (Ps) of making his name and descendants great on earth (1). In Our Lord's transfigured glory (3) is revealed that life and immortality which Paul tells us will rob death of its power (2). The Old Testament and Gospel are linked: sometimes the New Testament stands on its own, and sometimes it is tied in with the other readings.

The Preparation of Gifts brings bread, wine, and peoples' financial offerings to the altar to be consecrated and dedicated to the service of God and His Church. These gifts represent us. Bread, made up of many grains, is the marrow of the earth, and wine, made up of many grapes, is its lifeblood. In bringing them to the altar, we bring ourselves to be offered, consecrated, and received by the world. These gifts symbolize the unity of the Church, one Body worshipping together.

"Leading up to **the Consecration**, the priest recites the narrative of the Last Supper (in the Eucharistic Prayers for Reconciliation during Lent), connecting what we experience at every Mass with [Christ's] institution of the Eucharist" (Kelly, 83). The priest's words, "This is my Body . . . This is my Blood" actually change bread and wine into Flesh and Blood, under sacramental veils. The priest bows and breathes on the gifts of bread and wine, communicating the Spirit of God. It is a miracle, witnessed by you, me, and the angels who stand around every altar, singing the praises of God.

After the Hosts are fractured, **Holy Communion** is distributed. "This is the moment when we receive the body and blood of Jesus in the form of bread and wine" (Kelly, 84). We form a line, resembling soup kitchen lines from the Great Depression, and fittingly so, because we are beggars at the kitchen of the Church. Frequent Communion, for those in a state of grace, is encouraged. Confession of mortal sins must come *first* for those in mortal sin. There are lots of opportunities, especially in Lent, to prepare your soul and mine for the worthy celebration of Mass.

"The Mass reveals God's vision for us as individuals, his vision for marriage and family, and for community and society, and for the Church and the world" (Kelly, 87). As you go in peace, remember: First ecstasy, then laundry. God bless.