

July 2, 2017

How many of you noticed something new on the way in this morning? Some of you? That's the way it always seems to be—some people are able to drive and look around, and some people just drive, their hands on the wheel and looking forward. Well, on your way out, please look. It's not finished, the date line and the power line are not connected. The LED screen will be up and running, hopefully, next week, so that we can program Mass times. People will no longer have to park, walk around and find the front door, and look in and see if they can see what times the Masses are. They will be able to see it from the street. I have to tell you that we got a great bargain on that. It cost \$22,000. We got a grant for \$15,000. Generous parishioners have donated \$3,000, so it's costing us about \$3,000. The electrician is going to hook up the lines to the sign and do all that work because they have to come from the electric box over here all the way out there. He happens to be a classmate of my brothers at Seton High, back in the day, and he is going to do it for free. I know, can you imagine? So, my brother is patting himself on the back, the reason we are getting such a discount over here is because of him. He always does that. And, I don't care, because it's free. Like Ronald Reagan on the desk. It doesn't matter who gets the credit as long as good comes out of it. So, I'm alright with that. So those of you who missed it, you'll have to go by, and figure out what we are talking about. Hee hee hee. They didn't like that last night either. Anyway...

Today let's talk about the second reading. Let's talk about the reading of Saint Paul to the Romans. The letter of Saint Paul to the Romans was the first one he wrote. It was written less than 20 years or about 20 years after Jesus left us. So, it is the earliest writing we have in the New Testament. The gospels are much much later--actually, than most of the letters of Saint Paul. Saint Paul wrote to the Romans. We think about all these big cities in the 21st Century. When we say Rome, we think of this big city like New York, like San Francisco, like Phoenix. But yet back in the day, Saint Paul's day, Rome was not that big. Yes, it was a major seaport at the time. You go there now and it's so far away from the Mediterranean Sea it's not funny. But it used to be a major seaport. It was for its time a relatively large city. But Christianity, think of this, less than 20 years after Jesus ascended, how big of a church could it be? If you look around at how many people are in here today, that's probably how big the Church in Rome was at the time. Jewish converts, gentile converts, and they had known about Jesus, and they had accepted Jesus, and they had been baptized. But, so far, there's no books to teach them what is the faith. So Saint Paul, wrote this letter to teach them about the faith. It is the first theological treatise—a theological document written in the Catholic Church. And it's very deep. A very deep document. It's not one of those documents you can read in bed. Because if you do, sleep will come before you ever finish it. But if you get a chance, and want to try it, go ahead. Because you'll see what Saint Paul is saying is exactly what Pope Francis and Pope John Paul II and all those guys are saying today. And have been saying. So it shows us the continuity of the Catholic Church.

Today's reading talks about something that we don't like to hear about and yet, last week I mentioned, one of the four fears that Jesus said, "Don't be afraid." That was death. We see that he says, "Are you unaware, that we who are baptized into Christ Jesus, were baptized into his death?" Now unless we go to a lot of funerals, were not going to hear this very often. Most of us have been trained and have listened for, "We are baptized to become sons and daughters of God and get eternal life." So, we hear the life part. We don't hear about the fact that being baptized, is being baptized into the death of Jesus. When we receive the Eucharist, Communion, we are participating in the death of Jesus. When we make the sign of the cross, have crucifixes on our walls, we are remembering an instrument of torcher. A

horrible horrible thing. We do that all the time. Why is the Catholic Church so intent on death? Well, let's go back to Baptism. Let's do some history of that. Back in the day, for several hundred years, we were baptizing mostly adults, converts. Then we started baptizing children and realized we couldn't do this. The priest would get into the water in this font, this pool, with the people being baptized. He would take them and say, "I baptize you, in the name of the Father..." and he would hold them under, and hold them under, and hold them under, until he felt them start to struggle. Then he would bring them out and they, "Auuuuughhh" (deep gasp), and just as they catch their breath, "and of the Son." He lowered them until they were under and start to struggle. Brings them up, "Auuuuugh" (gasp), "...and of the Holy Spirit." By that time, they come out, the Holy Spirit, they just pop up and feel like they're living a new life. A new lease on life. A different person. They died in the waters of Baptism. They have come up into a new life. This is what we don't do today. How many babies would mothers let us do that to? Now here's the thing, you all remember the experimentation in the 70's. Most of us do. The liturgist used to say, you take a little baby and you put his little behind or her little behind in your hand, and they're naked. And you squeeze their little behinds so bad stuff doesn't come out. The heads up here in the crook of the elbow. You take them and do this (making a swooping dip). You put them in the water like that and bring them up. Well some of the priests tried it and the mothers almost killed them. Why? Because, where's the nose? Down here. Where's the water running? Right up their little nose. So that didn't last very long. Everybody wanted, after Vatican II, to go back in history of the church. That didn't make it. If you go to Easter Vigil in some churches, you will see them dunked. Now the priest doesn't hold them down until they're struggling because we wouldn't get very many converts that way if they found out that was going to happen.

But we are looking at what happens. We are a new creation. We become something we are not before Baptism. We see that death is a way to life. We see Jesus on the Cross—death is a way to life. We see in receiving Holy Communion, the death of Jesus. His Body, Blood, Soul and Divinity we consume brings new life within us. For God, death on this Earth means life in the next world. So we can't get away from death, even though we try. The number one disease of our culture today is fear of death. People try every means, subconsciously or consciously, to get away from death—sex, drugs, alcohol, plastic surgery, all this medication. I just saw an add the other day for a doctor of anti-aging. She's going to get a lot of money. But, those people are going to die anyway. After a while people are going to say, "Stop." We are so afraid of death, it even comes into unconscious accumulation of possessions like putting money in the bank. Maybe if I have enough things, I won't die—this subconscious thing that we are trying to put off. And yet, that's not what the Church wants us to realize. We get inoculated. They inject part of a disease into us so our bodies' immune system builds up and we are not going to catch that disease. Vaccinations prevent the disease. That's what vaccinations are all about. The Church, with death, is vaccinating us against fear of death. As Christians, we realize, or should realize, with our faith, the death in this life is life in the next. The dying to ourselves in this life, produces happiness in life for ourselves and others. But we have to get away from that fear of death. The saints did it. They were mothers, fathers, husbands, wives, priests, sisters—all those people. They were able to get away from fear of death and so instead of accumulating things, instead of going off the deep end, they were able to use the things of this world the way God wants them used. With joy, enjoying things, and not get attached. It never ceases to amaze me when I get on a flight in my blacks. First off, I try and fly first class because I'm single. But I get in first class, or wherever, and I order a glass of wine. And how many people including the flight attendants, will come up and say, "I thought you guys weren't supposed to drink." Then I tell them about, when you have 4 Catholics, you have a fifth. ....Anyway, I explain to

them, "No, we do not give up things, of this world. We enjoy them." How many thin priests do you see?..... And if they're thin, even us, fellow priests worry, "Are you sick?" Because we enjoy certain things of this life. Are we attached? By no means. We do enjoy certain things in life. If we don't have it, fine. But that's the Catholic mentality, enjoy the things of this life. But don't get hooked on the things of this life. We realize as priests, we're going to die. And we are looking forward to it like the saints did. Not, "Go ahead and kill me now," but we know we're going to die. And we accept we are going to die. When you become ordained, the bishop hands you a packet and he says, "Now I want you to fill out your funeral request. I want you to plan your funeral. What music you're going to have." And most of us don't do that. We figure, you know, we're going to be dead. Let the bishop deal with that. Whoever he is. You know, we don't care who gets our possessions. We don't care who gets the bank account. We fill out wills, but you know, it doesn't matter. We're going to be dead. So many people worry about where they are going to be buried. Who they're going to be buried with. Who they are going to leave this to or that to. I know a priest, in my past, that I met a long time ago, we were friends. His brother died and his sister-in-law remarried. He was so fixated on, "Oh my gosh, is she going to bring that stranger into the family plot? The family cemetery?" He ended up having a nervous breakdown and going into a mental institution. That's extreme. Who do you care who's beside you when you're dead? Your dead! What are you going to do, wake up and say, "Hi, want a cup of tea?" No, you're dead. You are busy somewhere else hopefully. Occupied with something else. So this whole thing about death as a Christian is, the Church inoculates us. It wants us to realize, death is inevitable, death is going to happen. But the inoculation is, "Have no fear, of death." Saint Paul says that. He says, "Just as Christ was raised from the dead off the Cross on the third day, we too will rise from Baptism and death to a newness of life." And in that newness of life, is just exactly that. That ability to realize, I'm going to die, but that's okay. Because it's part of the natural life that God has for us. And it doesn't matter what happens. We shouldn't have fear of it because God is with us. So when we are baptized, we participate in the sacraments of the Catholic Church. We participate in death, but only to be reminded that the end result isn't death—but is life. God Bless You!