

A Mission Church

Sacred Food, Sacred Work

Too bad we can't talk with those people who came and settled this region in the 1800's, especially when the large influx occurred during the turn of the twentieth century. It's a pity that someone didn't write down the thoughts of those people long ago. Some traveled many miles to celebrate the Eucharist for a large number of years before sufficient residents could petition the bishop to form a new parish. If we could pick their brains, we'd probably learn what was most important to them. The safe bet would be a house, sufficient clothing and food, education, and God.

For the Catholic immigrants, it is likely that of greatest importance was the Eucharist. Can you hear them meeting the bishop? *"We want a priest so we can have Communion. Please give us our own parish and resident priest."* That's how it often happens even today. The desire is expressed by the people. The valid need is seen by the bishop, and the decision is made.

For that reason many brought a priest with them from the 'old country', just so they would be assured of the sacramental life of the Church, especially baptism, penance, and the Eucharist. This is when the local Church, the parish, was the center of activity and of life. It was GOD FIRST.

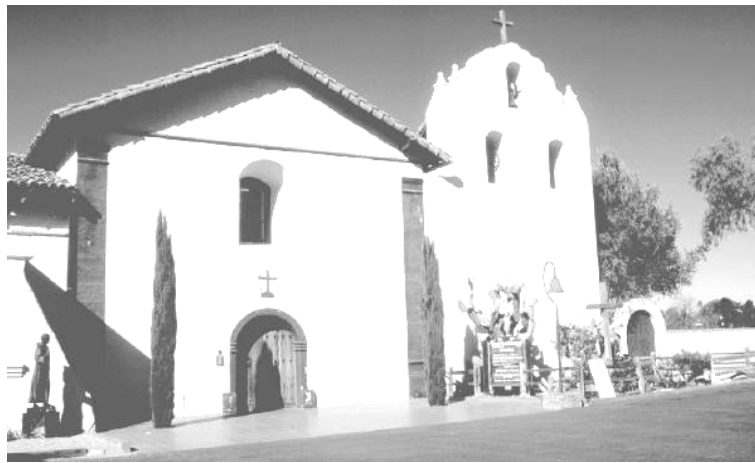
In doing so, they evangelized — within their own people, and beyond. They strengthened and nourished each other and their community. Today, we must be reminded of this. And, so often when we do this today, we're considered out of touch with reality or the world.

Of course, St. John Vianney faced a similar accusation with the people thinking he was out of step with reality. The people had all but boarded up the church in Ars, France, partly through persecution of the Church in France during the eighteen century when

secular 'Enlightenment' directed the actions of the national government, and partly through their desires for other lifestyles. It was eerily similar to the scenario faced by St. Francis of Assisi. History repeats — and is doing so today. We need Sacred Food! As in the past, the call to the Eucharist was first and foremost.

SACRED FOOD

A Parish, a local Church, a diocese is only as vibrant as is its union with Christ in the Eucharist. ***How else is it fed with proper nourishment? What else joins the entirety of the body?***



"Sacred Food", the Bread of Life and the Cup of Salvation, not only feed the body, while providing nourishment for its members. It also supplies the cause, the purpose for all that the parish, local Church, or

diocese aspires to be, or to accomplish. ***Sacred Food must be the desire of the Church Alive***, as Bishop Zubik often reminds us.

A MISSION CHURCH is all the more reliant on the sustenance of the Eucharist. It has its purpose rooted in the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus Christ. It is fed by the **Sacred Food** that is our God, divine life shared by our Lord. Because of this giving we are drawn into:

- the Sacramental sharing of our Savior,
- the Church's sharing as 'sacrament' in union with Jesus Christ,
- the caring for the whole of the Body above personal ambitions,
- the relevancy of Scripture, the eternal Word

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- of God constantly revealed,
- the power of the Holy Spirit, the infinite love of God,
- the gifts of the Spirit which enable us to grow in understanding, and therefore union, with our God,
- the Will of the Father.

SACRED WORK

‘Sacred Work’ is compelled by our sharing in the ‘Sacred Food’. You see, ‘Sacred Work’ requires the partaker of ‘Sacred Food’ to be open completely to the will of the Father. Withholding from this openness to the will of the Father is withholding from the ‘Sacred Work’ of Jesus Christ, the essence of the Eucharist.

Our ‘Sacred Work’ is a participation in the ‘Sacred Work’ of Jesus Christ. Receiving the ‘Sacred Food’ of Jesus – the Eucharist, is to receive the ‘Sacred Work’ handed down in the life of the Eucharist. And that ‘Sacred Work’? Well it’s about building the Kingdom of God in today’s world – a difficult task, but not far from what our Lord faced

in his own time, what Sts. John Vianney and Francis faced in their times.

HOW DO WE DO THIS ‘SACRED WORK?’

1) AT MASS – the “Work of the Church”

A) Be more aware of the Lord’s presence when gathering in Church.

B) Be more present to the Lord’s presence in the needs of those who gather for the Mass.

C) Assume the work of a minister, understanding that this is what our Lord did.

D) Be seen responding in prayer and heard in our joining of voices in hymns and songs to God. It may be hard when others look at us strangely, but that is their problem. You’re doing your part of the work of the gathered Church.

E) Befriend a recognized visitor, or bring others to our worship.

F) Above all else, assure that worship of God is before all else.

2) AT EUCHARISTIC ADORATION

This will not be happening at St. John’s again until September as so many members of the Church are away during the summer months. But the silent time before the Lord helps us discern what the will of the Father is for us.

3) HOST A GATHERING

Offer your backyard and home as a place for the Church to gather in August for informal discussions on the evangelization of your own community and other sug-



gestions made by pastoral council and parishioners. In this, we will do what Bishop Zubik calls for us to do: “Build the Church.”

4) BECOME A NEIGHBORHOOD TEAM MEMBER

This may include a few things for individuals and families:

A) Become the eyes and ears of new families moving into your housing plan.

B) Be visitors to new neighbors, providing a small gift and information concerning St. Johns, or if needed, other faith communities.

C) Offer to bring them to Mass for a month until they become comfortable.

D) Help make sure they become registered.

E) Encourage existing neighbors to update their census records and registration status (online when available).

5) BECOME INVOLVED.

There’s nothing easier than becoming an active member in the life of the parish through involvement in its ministries and organizations. Remember, these are meant to do ‘Sacred Work’.

6) DEEPEN A PRAYER LIFE

This is a good habit to have as it will be seen in other aspects of your life. Others will see it ruling your life, and you, in turn, controlling your life as it should be.