

## **Principle Three:** **Liturgy, through the Power of Christ, Makes People Holy.** <sup>23</sup>

Holy, holy, holy.... <sup>24</sup> Holy is God. Holy is Christ. Holy is the Spirit. The great saints in our tradition are holy men and women, and even among the living, each of us can name people whose holiness we recognize.

It is often harder to call holy those who live under the same roof, those who sit in the same classroom, and those who work in the same business or factory. But holy we are, more because of God's grace than our own efforts. Since God's desire is our perfection, <sup>25</sup> the only way to reach the kingdom of heaven is along the path of holiness. <sup>26</sup>

Baptism indeed makes us God's holy people. <sup>27</sup> The explanatory rites that follow the water bath remind us who we are and what we believe. We are priestly, prophetic, and royal people because of God's holy action. <sup>28</sup> In the saving waters, we have put on Christ and walk now as children of light. <sup>29</sup> This sets us on the pathway of holiness. We follow Christ who is the way, the truth, and the life. <sup>30</sup>

Blessings and sacramentals are ways to remain on the holiness path. Blessings declare God's own goodness through prayers of praise, thanks, and worship. <sup>31</sup> To the faithful, they are perceptible signs of human sanctification. <sup>32</sup>

### **Good Practices to Foster**

The Christian life helps believers to see with eyes of faith. It helps us see the earth and human activity as God sees them. Because God is holy, all that God creates is holy. God's daily mantra in the creation story is: this is good, this is good...man and woman, this is very good. <sup>33</sup>

Saint Casimir is a small parish that serves a portion of a rural county. It looks for ways to give praise to God in the events, actions, and intentions of the parishioners. Long accustomed to blessing seed and soil, farming implements, animals, fields, and harvests, the parish was less familiar with blessing people. In this community where people and their circumstances are well known to each other, Sunday Mass now includes, for those who wish, blessings for engagement, childbirth, the sick, children, students, and travelers. On occasion even the celebration of marriage takes place during the parish Mass. Those who care for the land have long respected this holy earth that they steward. Now they regularly pray over the holiness of the people blessed by God.

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<sup>23</sup> *Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy*, no. 7.

<sup>24</sup> *The Roman Missal*, Eucharistic Prayer.

<sup>25</sup> Matthew 5:4-8; John 10:10.

<sup>26</sup> VATICAN COUNCIL II, *Dogmatic Constitution on the Church Lumen Gentium*, 21 November 1964, no. 40; Ephesians 5:3; Colossians 3:12; Galatians 5:27; Romans 6:22.

<sup>27</sup> *Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults*, no. 222, the Celebration of the Sacraments of Initiation, Prayer over the Water; *The Roman Missal*, Rite of Blessing and Sprinkling Holy Water.

<sup>28</sup> *Lectionary for Mass*, no. 52A, Fifth Sunday of Easter, Year A, 1 Peter 2:4-9; *Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults*, no. 228 and *Rite of Baptism for Children*, no. 62, anointing after baptism of those who are not confirmed at the same celebration.

<sup>29</sup> *Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults*, nos. 229-230.

<sup>30</sup> *Lectionary for Mass*, no. 52A, Fifth Sunday of Easter, Year A, John 14:1-12.

<sup>31</sup> *Book of Blessings*, no. 6.

<sup>32</sup> *Book of Blessings*, no. 9; *Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy*, no. 60.

<sup>33</sup> *Lectionary for Mass*, no. 41ABC, first Old Testament reading for the Easter Vigil, Genesis 1:2-2:2.

Saint Catherine Parish makes sure that a significant time for prayer is part of every gathering of catechumens and candidates. Within that prayer, a blessing is most often included, although a minor exorcism or an anointing is also used to a lesser degree. The intent of this praying is to “Bless these your servants...[and] sanctify them...”<sup>34</sup> This same approach is taken in all catechetical and formational gatherings.

Taking a cue from the Divine Liturgy of the Eastern Churches – “Holy things for the holy”<sup>35</sup> – Saint Charles Parish looks for ways to bless holy things and send them home with holy people. On Christmas Day, blessed straw from the parish manger is taken home with this invitation: “Holy people, take this blessed straw home for your own manger. Let it remind you that the God who was unafraid to become one like us in all things but sin, wants us to be holy like the Son of God.” On Candlemas Day, February 2, parishioners take home blessed candles wrapped with this message: “Let these holy candles burn in your home as you pray in times of joy and sorrow. And remember in your praying that you, too, are holy by God’s holy design.” On Easter Day, parishioners take home blessed water from the baptismal font. The message affixed to the bottle proclaims: “Use this water to bless yourselves and your activities and recall that God made you holy people in the saving waters of baptism.” Holy cards with images and stories of saints both ancient and modern are placed in bulletins, school packets, and periodic mailings to offer models for holy Christian living.

Saint Clare Parish strives to be a good steward of the earth and its resources. The parish actively recycles paper, bottles, and cans. Rather than adding more trash to the landfill, china plates, stainless flatware, and linen tablecloths are used for parish events as well as the parish’s turns for the biweekly town-wide dinners for the poor. The constant message is “a holy earth is cared for by a holy people.”

### **Dangers to Avoid**

Preaching and bulletin writing that constantly dwell on the transgressions, shortcomings, and sinful acts of the baptized can smother the truth that we are, in fact, the apple of God’s eye.

Hurried celebrations of baptism with drops of water, dabs of oil, and tiny candles do not clearly speak about whose we are. Celebrations with little music and passive congregations do not clearly reflect the holiness of the baptized bringing one more child of God into the holy fellowship of those made new in Christ.

Poor liturgical celebrations for holy days of obligation neither express the Church’s care for these days nor encourage the faithful to honor them. These solemnities are rooted in days of thanks and praise of such holiness that they were gladly observed. When these days are perceived as burdens on people and staff alike (rather than the joyful times of Mass and fellowship as intended) or when little thought or attention are given to their good celebration, the parish misses the mark.

### **What Is at Stake**

“Holy” is not a title we attach to things and people so that they are set apart and locked away. Holiness is our birthright because of baptism into Christ. Holiness is a way of life. It is a cherished pathway to all-holiness, the God whom we worship and adore. A life of holiness is the way to our destiny – life with God for ever and ever.

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<sup>34</sup> *Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults*, no 97B and see all the Rites Belonging to the Period of the Catechuminate, nos. 81-103.

<sup>35</sup> In the immediate preparation for Communion in many of the Eastern Churches, just before the fraction, the priest shows the Lamb [of God] to the faithful and says to them: “Holy things for the holy.”

**Principle Three:**

**Liturgy, through the Power of Christ, Makes People Holy.**

- Read the preceding two pages.
- In silence, write down additional (1) good practices to foster and (2) dangers to avoid. Do this either as homework to prepare for the meeting or during some silence provided during the meeting.
- Share this individual work in the large group.

<b>(1) – More Good Practices to Foster</b>

<b>(2) – More Dangers to Avoid</b>

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- In silence, (3) assess the current parish practice concerning this principle for good liturgy.
- Then listen to the assessing of current parish practice each person has done respecting any differences expressed while at the same time testing each assessment with the values and principles of Roman Catholic liturgy. Affirm the good practices of the parish.
- Brainstorm (4) dreams for the parish to improve the celebration of liturgy.

<b>(3) – Assessing Current Parish Practice</b>

<b>(4) – Dreams for Parish Improvement</b>