



# Pastor's Column

St. Peter Catholic Church

December 23, 2018, Fourth Sunday of Advent

## *The Mass Explained- The Homily (continued), the Creed, and the General Intercessions*

We continue our Pastor Column series on the Mass explained, and we continue with the homily and turn also to the Creed and the General Intercessions, thus concluding the Liturgy of the Word.

The homily. Last week, we considered what is the fundamental purpose of the homily; this, week, I offer some insight into my approach toward homily preparation. First of all, any preparation must be infused with prayer, through and through; otherwise, it risks becoming static sermonizing and completely devoid of the life of the Holy Spirit. I begin my preparation generally the Sunday prior, immediately following the last Sunday Mass; I print the Sunday readings and carry them with me so as to pray with them during my daily Holy Hour and to begin taking notes regarding where the Holy Spirit seems to be leading me. I use *lectio divina* and pray with the Sacred Scripture on a deep level. Added to this is the broader context in which we live: the liturgical season; whatever might be going on in our parish, our diocese, or the world; etc. Also, to help me be sure that my homily hopefully will speak at least to some of our parishioners in a way that they really need, I consider what parishioners share with me during the week, what burdens they are being made to carry, what sufferings they are being made to endure, and so on. And all of that is taken to heart, taken into prayerful consideration, as I begin to draft and finalize my homily.

After the homily comes the Creed. In about the year 60 AD, Saint Paul wrote to the Church in Rome that "if you confess with your mouth that Jesus is Lord and believe in your heart that God raised Him from the dead, you will be saved." And then, at the Church councils for the next five centuries, Christians had been striving to unpack and define what it means exactly to confess that Jesus is Lord. The Creed (*credo* in Latin – "I believe") is the fruit of five hundred years. With so much ideological confusion and conflict in our world today, and with the very existence and meaning of truth itself called into question, at the very least, we can always rely on the Creed, that brilliant, complete, and concise summary of our Catholic Christian faith. The Apostles Creed is traditionally held to have been the statement of faith that the Apostles professed together before parting their separate ways for the last time and ultimately being martyred. The Nicene Creed is the Apostles Creed expounded with articles of the faith drawn from the various Church councils of the first five hundred years of Christianity.

The General Intercessions. This is the part of the Mass where we bring our prayers and petitions as a community, as a family in faith, to the Lord. By their nature as *general* intercessions, it is not the place here to list each and every single specific, particular intercession; for that reason, we always conclude our General Intercessions for those prayers that we bring to the Mass in the quiet of our hearts. There is, more or less, a sequence to how the General Intercessions unfold: for the Church; for the world and for the world's leaders; for those of our local community who are in need; for the faithful departed.

~ Fr. Lewis