

Weekly Message from Fr William for Thirty-Second Sunday in Ordinary Time 2022

Dear People of St Mary's

In recent meetings I've been encouraged in the Parish Pastoral Council to give a word of explanation for different parts of the Mass from time to time. This would be to give the parish community a greater understanding of what's happening in the Mass, and what we're doing in the Mass, and help make our experience of each part of the mass a truly meaningful one. I think the suggestion is a good one provided I can find a way of doing this so that it doesn't intrude on our celebration of liturgy. Hopefully, instead, it will enhance it.

And so I started Mass last Sunday with a word about the Greeting. Our celebration of the Liturgy always begins with a greeting. The priest greets everyone with words of greeting, beautiful and profound words of greeting that Christians have used to greet one another since the earliest days of the Church. I greet you with the words 'The Lord be with you' and you return the greeting with the words 'And with your spirit.'

We can see this in the letters of St Paul. Writing to the early Christian communities he often greets them like this. 'The Lord be with your spirit.' (2 Timothy 4:22) or 'The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with your spirit.' (Galatians 6:18, Philippians 4:23, Philemon 6:25). For Paul the human spirit is the spiritual part of a person most closely united to the Spirit of God, and most open to the Spirit of God. For Christians to greet one another with this heartfelt prayer, that Lord be with them in the deepest part of their humanity, was a beautiful way to greet each other, and it still is. When we greet each other at the beginning of the Mass let's have as much of this intention in our hearts and minds as we can.

Pope Francis in his recent letter on the Liturgy says that the congregation celebrating the mass with their priest have 'the right to feel in his words the desire that the Lord has, today as at the Last Supper, to eat the Passover with us.' (*Desiderio Desideravi* 57).

I hope this kind of explanation is helpful. I'm sure I'll offer you this short explanation again as I know that not everybody is able to make it to mass every Sunday. And then we can look at other parts of the Mass on future Sundays going forward.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "William". The script is cursive and somewhat stylized.