From the Pastor



November 8, 2026

Dearest Brothers & Sisters in Christ,

Two weeks ago, I started relaying some of the important things conveyed to us at the annual Fall Ministry Conference, beginning with charitable outreach through Catholic Charities and the St. Vincent de Paul Society. This week I'd like to continue with marriage and family ministry.

We are truly blessed at this time in the Church. There is so much more available for the support of marriage and family life. The fall ministry conference focused on the enrichment and continuing formation and growth in living the Sacrament of Matrimony (marriage) provided through Worldwide Marriage Encounter and Domestic Church Circles.

Worldwide Marriage Encounter has been in the Diocese of La Crosse for a very long time; at least fifty years now. This retreat-based support for marriage began as a retreat for 28 couples in 1962 in Barcelona, Spain. This retreat experience came to the United States in 1968 and in 1969 a national organization was formed to extend and give form to this unique and beautiful experience for deepening couple's experience of married covenant love. These weekend retreats are offered regularly in and near the Diocese of La Crosse and are publicized in these parishes whenever they are offered.

Domestic Church Circles come from the experience of communist era Poland and the "Light and Life" movement. With encouragement from his friend, the future Pope St. John Paul the Great, in 1973 Fr. Francis Blachnicki developed this ministry to married couples. This beautiful program brings four to seven couples together once a month, after having made a three-day retreat, to support one another in living the seven-point program of prayer and intentional conversation. This movement came to the Diocese of La Crosse about ten years ago. Two couples in our parishes are involved and would love to share their experience with you.

We are greatly blessed in this diocese. There are significant opportunities for marriage enrichment in this diocese which we will continue to publicize and make available to all in our parishes and in the Chippewa Valley.

Pray Well!

Fr. Michael

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Note: Pope Leo's Oct.21 catechesis covered chapter 6 of Vatican II's *Pastoral Constitution on the Church* discussing marriage. It's worth your attention.

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On Living the Vocation to the Holiness

Two weeks ago, I introduced the topic of music in the liturgy. I cited central documents of the Church's teaching and regulation on music. Today I would like to discuss an important point that has often been missed in the liturgical life of local communities over the past many years, even the pre-conciliar years.

When most people think of music in the context of the liturgy, they typically think of the songs we sing: an opening song, and Offertory song, a Communion song, and a closing song. There may also be music after Communion. Generally, if there is a choir or cantor which sings something special, we are all the more delighted, but we generally judge the music of the liturgy by these things. This is not what the Church means when she speaks of music in the liturgy.

When the Church speaks of music in the liturgy, she is principally speaking of the parts of the Mass: the *ordinary*, the *dialogues*, and other parts that are commonly recited by the assembly. The ordinary of the Mass includes the *Kyrie* (Lord, have mercy), the *Gloria*, the *Sanctus* (Holy, holy), and the *Agnus Dei* (Lamb of God). Traditionally, the ordinary of the Mass also includes the *Creed*, which is very rarely sung in the last 50 years. The ordinary is those parts of the Mass that are generally always included and whose text never changes. The dialogues are, quite simply, the parts in which the priest or deacon are in dialogue with the assembly. The most obvious example: "*The Lord be with you. And with your spirit.*" Those other parts would include, most significantly, the *Our Father*.

Secondarily, she speaks of those parts recited by the priest. These include the *collects* and the *preface* to the Eucharistic Prayer. These, too, are highly recommended for singing rather than simply speaking.

The question, then, becomes: "Why does the Church so highly commend singing these parts of the Mass to her children?" Quite simply, the Church understands that music lifts the words that are spoken in a unique and powerful way. The difference between speaking a word and singing a word is the difference between a word that comes out almost flat and a word that soars. Like a wave, it lifts the assembly and soars to heaven. Too poetic, philosophical? No. I've experienced it so many times. The difference between a congregation "punching a ticket" and an assembly worshipping "in spirit and in truth".

Next week we will continue this topic.

