**Liturgy Matters Lesson #4 - “Bishop Presides Over the Sacred Liturgy”**

**By Bishop Chad Zielinski**

Thank you for joining me as we continue our lessons on “What Happens at Mass.”

In imagining our ideal celebration, we should also include the bishop as the one who presides at the liturgy. Even though our usual experience is with a priest presiding, we must understand that behind every priest is the bishop who ordained him and sent him to a particular community to lead the Eucharistic celebration. In what God has arranged for His people, there is really only one priest, Christ himself. Those whom we call bishops and priests represent the one and only priest, Christ himself. They are mysteries or sacraments, concrete people in whom a divine reality is hidden.

In the case of Mass, they are the reality of Christ as priest. The bishop is the head of a diocesan Church, its leader, and chief authority. But he is not this as an individual person, the lucky guy who gets to be in charge. He represents Christ as the head, the leader, and the community's only authority. Likewise, a priest is not a free-floating agent, the one who gets to be in charge in a parish setting. He represents the bishop, who represents Christ as head of the community. However, it is important to remember that Christ shares his priesthood with all the baptized. If the bishop or priest at the head of the Eucharistic assembly is meant to be a sign of the one priesthood of Christ, all his words and actions during the rite are geared toward uniting the people with him in what he is doing. Precisely in the Mass, Christ wishes to unite all his people with himself in his priestly act of offering himself to the Father for the sake of the world. In this sense, Christ's people are priests, not because they represent his one and only priesthood as bishops and priests do, but because they are united with him in his priestly act.

I want to extend a "shout out" and a huge thanks to all the priests in the Diocese of New Ulm who lay down their lives in sacrifice so multiple Masses may be offered to the good people of God scattered throughout the diocese. Also, I thank you, good faithful of God, for your “yes” to Christ and your baptismal priesthood. Thanks for being united to me, your shepherd, and to the priests in announcing the Good News of the Gospel.

May God continue to strengthen us as we grow closer to Him through our understanding and participation in the Holy Mass. Let us keep one another in prayer. May God bless you and your families.

Sincerely in Christ,

Bishop Chad Zielinski