**Liturgy Matters Lesson #1 —“Mysteries”**

**By Bishop Chad Zielinski**

Dear Sisters and Brothers in Christ,

As most of you know, the Catholic dioceses throughout the nation are currently involved in a Eucharistic Revival, a three-year process initiated by the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops that began in 2022 and will culminate with the National Eucharistic Congress 2024 in Indianapolis.

This year we are asked as a diocese to draw deeper into our understanding of the Eucharist at a diocesan level. Each diocese is encouraged to hold various events drawing the faithful together to encounter the hope and healing of Jesus Christ in the Holy Eucharist.

I was asked recently by my brother priests and some of the faithful of the diocese to share a teaching on the Eucharist. Therefore, I will be walking you through lessons on the Mass published in a book written by a good friend of mine, Abbot Jeremy Driscoll, OSB. The book is entitled “What Happens at Mass.” This entire journey will involve 36 lessons where we will dive deep into the Mass and draw closer to Christ in the Holy Eucharist.

I encourage you to visit the Diocese of New Ulm website, [www.dnu.org/eucharistic-revival](http://www.dnu.org/eucharistic-revival) and learn more about the mysteries of the Sacred Liturgy we call Mass.

**Recalling our baptism**

We begin every celebration of the Holy Eucharist by recalling our baptism, “In the name of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.” Following the greeting of “The Lord be with you” and the response of the faithful, “And with your spirit,” the priest leads all into the Penitential Rite, “Brothers and sisters, let us acknowledge our sins and so prepare ourselves to celebrate the sacred mysteries.” What are the sacred mysteries that we are invited to enter into?

Abbot Jeremy lifts a veil and invites us to peer into the inexhaustible mystery of the Sacred Liturgy in the first lesson. He notes: “From the time of the apostles, the Christian community celebrated the rites of Baptism and the Eucharist in obedience to the Lord's commands *(Matthew 28:19; Luke 22:19)*. From as early as the second century, these rites were referred to as “Mysteries.” The roots of this lie in the theology of St. Paul, who used the word “mystery” as a key concept in his full understanding of the unity of the divine and human natures in Christ. For St. Paul, the central mystery is the Cross of Christ. He does so to express that something was hidden in the cross, which we cannot understand without its being revealed. As he explains in the second chapter of the first letter to the Corinthians, when “the rulers of this age” crucified Christ, they did not understand who he was, for his true identity was hidden. But in fact, the rulers of this age crucified “the Lord of Glory.” This is because, as he said, “None of the rulers of this age knew the mystery. If they had known it, they would never have crucified the Lord of Glory” *(1 Corinthians 7-8)*. If we use a phrase like “the Mystery of the Eucharist,” this does not mean that which cannot be understood about the Eucharist. It means that the Eucharist is a concrete something in which a divine reality is hidden. If we use the word in the singular, “Mystery of the Eucharist,” it refers to the rite as a whole. The Eucharist was and is called “The Mysteries,” and

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here the reference is to the various dimensions working together. The gestures, the words, the bread and wine, the members of the assembly in their various roles, all of these are mysteries. In them is hidden the Lord of Glory.”

Yes, the source and summit of our faith is the community gathered for the celebration of the Holy Eucharist. As I have traveled throughout the 15 counties of the Diocese of New Ulm over the past five months, I drive through the inexhaustible mystery of God's creation. When I was installed as your bishop on September 27, the fall harvest was in full swing. The entire diocese radiated the golden hue of beans and corn as farmers diligently worked 24/7 to harvest a record crop yield for many areas. Now, the empty fields are blanketed with several inches of snow. The prairie winds stirring up the snow and sculpting drifts as if a potter did this firsthand reminds me of traveling through the arctic tundra of Alaska.

Soon, the close-to-record snowfall will melt and provide the most needed moisture for the soil. Tractors will be scurrying about tilling the soil, followed by planting. Then comes the long patient waiting of the farmer. The farmers pray, agonize, and hope for all the elements of nature to work together to produce the plant that will yield an abundant fall harvest. Brothers and sisters, this cycle of nature is covered in the mystery of the Creator. Creation is a most generous gift from God, and it is truly lavished upon it in the prairie of south-central Minnesota. As we observe and engage with endless hard work and extend a helping hand to a neighbor, all of this encounter with God's mystery of creation lives within us and moves us to Church on Sunday. It helps us enter into the fullness of all mystery, the Sacred Mysteries of the Holy Mass, and our response to our Creator is simply to “to give thanks”, in Greek, *eucharistia*.

Brothers and Sisters, thanks for joining me in this first session as we walk through the inexhaustible mysteries of the Mass. I very much look forward to our journey through the next 35 sessions.

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