

Homily Outline for the 8th Sunday of the Year – Cycle C
Mass in Time of War or Civil Disturbance (in Ukraine)
Blessing of the New Organ at
St. Augustine Church, Ashland, Illinois
February 27, 2022

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- I. It is good to be here for the blessing of the new organ here at St. Augustine Church, which took place before Mass.
 - A. As I said in my introductory remarks before the blessing of the organ, the purpose of music in the liturgy is above all to give glory to God and to lead us to holiness.
 - B. Thus the music of the organ wonderfully expresses the new song that Scripture tells us to sing to the Lord.
 - C. A musical instrument like an organ helps us to sing, and Saint Paul urges us to give thanks to God by singing His praises with hearts and voices.

- II. Today is the 8th Sunday in Ordinary Time, the last Sunday before Lent begins this week on Ash Wednesday.
 - A. While this is a festive day here at St. Augustine Church in Ashland to celebrate your church's new organ, we are also mindful of events taking place elsewhere in the world, especially the Russian invasion of Ukraine.
 - B. I have no special expertise in military strategy or international diplomacy, but it is apparent to everyone in the free world that the Russian attack on the sovereign country of Ukraine is an unprovoked and unjustified act of aggression, which has already cost the lives and livelihoods of many innocent people.
 - C. Our strongest weapon and the most important thing we can do today is pray.
 - D. In light of the Russian invasion of Ukraine and the ensuing war that is being fought there, I gave permission this Sunday for priests in our diocese to celebrate the Mass "In Time of War or Civil Disturbance," from the section of the Roman Missal that contains the texts for Masses and Prayers for Various Needs and Occasions.

1. In the Opening Prayer for this Mass, we prayed to “God, author and lover of peace,” asking Him to “defend us against every attack of those who cry to you, so that we, who trust in your protection, may not fear the weapons of any foe.” Indeed the Ukrainian people have been fearless in defending their nation against a much more powerful foe, and we pray for God to protect them.
 2. In the Prayer over the Gifts, I will pray that “this sacrifice [of the Mass] may restore peace and tranquility.”
 3. Then, in the Prayer after Communion, I will pray that, having been “nourished with the delights of the one Bread that fortifies the human heart, we may successfully overcome the fury of war and resolutely keep your law of love and justice.”
- E. Today we will also use a Eucharistic Prayer that you do not normally hear, so I encourage you to listen closely to the words of the prayer as I say them. It is the Second Eucharistic Prayer for Reconciliation, with its proper preface this Sunday, which contains this very fitting prayer:
1. “For though the human race is divided by dissension and discord, yet we know that by testing us you change our hearts to prepare them for reconciliation. Even more, by your Spirit you move human hearts that enemies may speak to each other again, adversaries may join hands, and peoples seek to meet together. By the working of your power it comes about, O Lord, that hatred is overcome by love, revenge gives way to forgiveness, and discord is changed to mutual respect.”
 2. The Eucharistic Prayer itself concludes with this plea: “Just as you have gathered us now at the table of your Son, so also bring us together, with the glorious Virgin Mary, Mother of God, with your blessed Apostles and all the Saints, with our brothers and sisters and those of every race and tongue who have died in your friendship. Bring us to share with them the unending banquet of unity in a new heaven and a new earth, where the fullness of your peace will shine forth in Christ Jesus our Lord.”
- F. The readings assigned for this Sunday are also very appropriate for prayers for in time of war:
1. From the book of Sirach (Sir 27:4-7) – “. . . in tribulation is the test of the just.”
 2. From St. Paul’s First Letter to the Corinthians (1 Cor 15:54-58) – “But thanks be to God who gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ.”
 3. From the Gospel of St. Luke (Lk 6:39-42) – “A good person out of the store of goodness in his heart produces good, but an evil person out of a store of evil produces evil.”

G. The Gospel message is all about conversion, about change. Changing behavior starts with changing the way we think and the way we talk.

1. There is a poster that urges its readers to "Watch your thoughts, they become your words... your actions... your habits... your character... your destiny." That expresses well the influence that our thoughts can have on our actions.
2. Obviously Russian President Vladimir Putin has been engaging in some very toxic and wrongful thinking, and has been saying outright lies about the Ukrainian people, leading to very violent actions with lethal consequences.
3. We must pray for his conversion and change of heart, for as we heard the words of Jesus in the Gospel of St. Luke, "A good person out of the store of goodness in his heart produces good, but an evil person out of a store of evil produces evil."

III. Jesus is the living Word of God made flesh. He is the embodiment of righteousness, virtue, and truth.

- A. When we listen to Jesus' word proclaimed and receive His Real Presence into our hearts in this Eucharist, we are fed, opened up, and transformed by Him. Jesus brings life and salvation, offering his very self so we may be healed and find union with him.
- B. As bread and wine are made the Body and Blood of Christ, so we are brought into His life and become members of Christ's Body in the Sacrament of the Eucharist.
- C. We come to receive the very essence of Goodness into our hearts, so that out of this store of goodness, we may bear good fruit in all of the thoughts, words, and actions of our lives.

IV. May God give us this grace. Amen.