

# St. Anthony of Padua R.C. Church

160 Court Street, Buffalo, New York 14202

**Traditionally Speaking** by S. Casarotto, CS 6/21/09

## The Mystery of Faith

*"The Church makes the Eucharist and the Eucharist makes the Church"*. These were the wise words of St. Augustine to his newly baptized.

After half a century of liturgical renewal meant to bring us closer to the mystery of the Eucharist, the percentage of Catholics attending mass every Sunday has plummeted. The majestic churches built by earlier generations of Irish, German, Polish and Italian immigrants are empty reminders of their good taste for beauty and their sacrifices in building the "house of God". They were also needed for the large numbers of Sunday worshippers. Another sign of the loss of faith in the Eucharist is the dramatic decrease in the number of mass intentions in all parishes.

A general intention in the Prayer of the Faithful should not lead us to forget the value of Sacrifice of the Mass for the individual and for "those who have died in the sign of faith". From the early centuries, the Church offered prayers for specific intentions. In fact, God does not save the "community". He saves the individual person. Only by saving the individual God saves the community.

One of the reasons for the decline in Eucharistic devotion is that Catholics are not taught in a practical way from their early age and through their teenage years to appreciate the great *"Mystery of Faith"*. Even Catholic schools and classes of Religious Education (we used to call them CCD), leave a lot to be desired in imparting knowledge and experience of the basics concerning the nature and parts of the Mass, meaning of its rituals and symbols, and the various traditions. Many Catholics must be reminded of why we bless ourselves and genuflect when we enter a Catholic church, and why we stand or kneel or sit during the various parts of the mass. The sacred apparel or colors or the liturgical calendar with its solemnities, days of obligation and feast days of Our Lady, Martyrs and Saints are often unknown to many Catholics who, on the other hand, are very familiar with the logos of sport teams, the names of the players, the scores and the standings in the league. Nobody is bored by watching sports events on TV for hours but they go to church with a stop watch.

Here is a reminder. Masses are always celebrated first of all in honor of the Blessed Trinity as shown by the various prayers of the mass. Masses may also be celebrated for special intentions such as in honor of Our Lady or a saint. They may be celebrated for a personal or family need (surgery, recovery of health, an anniversary, etc) and for a public need (protection from a calamity, peace, etc.) and for the needs of the Church (the hierarchy, vocations, religious men/women, missionaries, etc.).

Since I was a child, I remember that my mother always had a mass celebrated on my birthday. When I manifested the desire to enter the seminary, mother said: *"We must pray first!"* and my whole family attended a special mass together. That alone made me understand how special the mass was and how important it was to make a good choice for life. I remember also when I went for my High School finals, mother said: "You go and take the exams and I go and pray in church until you come home!" With mother providing the ammunition in the rear guard, I had to pass with good grades!