

## Father Michael Interviews

Timothy P. O'Malley

### “Becoming Eucharistic People: The Hope and Promise of Parish Life”

**Fr. Michael Denk:** Hi, this is Father Michael Denk. I am from the Diocese of Cleveland and working with The Prodigal Father as well to bring the new Evangelization and help people encounter Christ in their lives. I am very excited today because we are heading into this time of the Eucharistic Revival and pretty soon, on the Feast of Corpus Christi, parishes, at least in our diocese, are going to be focusing on the Eucharistic Revival. I am really blessed to have the author of *Becoming Eucharistic People: The Hope and Promise of Parish Life*. We have with us Timothy P. O'Malley and maybe you can just introduce yourself a little bit.

**Tim O'Malley:** Sure. I'm Tim O'Malley. I am the Director of Education here at McGrath Institute for Church Life at the University of Notre Dame where I'm also the Academic Director of the Notre Dame Center for Liturgy. I am a Liturgical Sacramental Theologian here at Notre Dame where I teach in Liturgy Sacraments, Theology of the Mass, and a big class for undergrads on Marriage and Family Life, second level theology.

I grew up in East Tennessee. I have lived in South Bend and in Boston. I am married and have two kids. This is my life here in Northern Indiana. It's May 2, 2023, of course you might be listening to this whenever, but it's cold and rainy so I am thinking about a vacation somewhere else. That is the deepest part of my life right now.

**Fr. Michael Denk:** Good, I hope you get that soon.

**Tim O'Malley:** I don't think that is going to happen but that is okay.

**Fr. Michael Denk:** Well, dream about it.

**Tim O'Malley:** Exactly.

**Fr. Michael Denk:** This book, by the way, is written I think for parishes to try to evaluate what the culture of the Eucharist is like in your parish. What I like is that at the end of each chapter you get very specific questions to look at and to just kind of evaluate and brainstorm how your parish is doing and maybe what you could do during this Eucharistic year.

It was really good for me. I am a new Administrator here at St. Matthias in Parma, OH. I am coming to the end of my first full year, but this was really good to give me a way to practically look at liturgy here at the parish. Look at the Eucharist and how we are celebrating that here and how we may be able to really use this year of Eucharistic Revival to enter more deeply into that. So, thank you for this. I really appreciated reading this and I encourage any parish leaders that are watching, the priests, anyone who might be the point contact person for the Eucharistic Revival in your parish or diocese to check out this book.

You start off by saying in the Preface that the Pandemic often precipitates renewals. I read that and that brought my heart immediate joy because I'm experiencing, and I am sure a lot of other parishes are experiencing that I don't think we have fully recovered from the Pandemic. There are still a lot of people engaged as they once might have been before the Pandemic, and this really could be a very providential renewal in church because of that. What are your thoughts on that?

**Tim O'Malley:** I think that says something about our American culture. We are highly optimistic people. We like to think perpetually that we're moving ever forward, upward, upward, and upward and the Pandemic was just a mere blip in our lives and therefore now we can move to the old normal whatever the old normal was, but of course a lot of things happened to folks during the Pandemic. There was isolation and distance. Folks who were kind of probably on their way out got an excuse to go all the way out. I mean, they did not miss it, or they weren't missed I should note. They didn't miss going to weekly Mass or they weren't missed from involvement in the life of the parish. I think we are still in that time. There are people who are mourning isolation and loneliness.

My undergraduates here at Notre Dame are suffering from mental health issues and anxiety partially precipitated by the Pandemic and I think you look at that and you could bemoan it, or you could be sad about it, you can whine about it, you can be annoyed that it exists, or you can do something. The church has always renewed herself when faced with these moments rather than retreating back into her shell. People are not coming back necessarily in the same number so, what are we going to do about it? Yet at the same time we know that in the midst of this Pandemic it seems like Gen Z, this youngest generation, suddenly has all this interest in religion and spirituality, at least partially. There are a lot of folks who are asking questions. What are we going to do about it and how can this be a source of renewal for us?

**Fr. Michael Denk:** You talk about the parish itself having a culture, a Eucharistic culture. Talk about that a little bit. What do you mean by culture in parish?

**Tim O'Malley:** I serve partially, I should note, as the Executive Director, I am on the executive team in the USCCB's Eucharistic Revival, and I was involved from the beginning. One of the things I thought about was, "What is a Eucharistic Revival?" A Eucharistic Revival of course has to be deeper devotion to the person of Jesus Christ. Of course every person has to have that devotion both in the Sacrifice of the Mass and the Adoration of the Blessed Sacrament. But, the parish, as Pope Francis always reminds us or the church, is not just individuals alone but it is a communion of people who are called to manifest this Communion of Christ to the world. I guess by parish culture I mean parishes developed certain like personalities just like I do. They're shaped by the personalities of their clergy, the priests and the deacons. They're shaped by staff; they're shaped by long-term lay involvement. Father, as you know if you are a new pastor there is always someone in their 60s who is involved in some sense in running the place or at least has this sort of long-term memory. Our culture, a Revival, can't just be me the individual person who comes to understand more about Christ in the Eucharist, it has to be the whole parish life. The parish life has to manifest that the roots of the church in the end is not bureaucracy, it's not strategic planning, it's not the endless writing of Mission Statements, but it is an encounter with the person of Jesus Christ in union of love. If we don't do that, then every individual can have a conversion and that is good and right and just, but cultures can continue even with individuals who are

on fire with The Lord and I think that is one of our tasks as well that our parishes manifest this space of encounter.

**Fr. Michael Denk:** My special focus for my priestly ministry has been on the New Evangelization, specifically prayer life, but this always is, and you mentioned it so many times throughout the book about the encounter, an encounter with Christ. So, keeping that as the focus for this whole next year how can we help people encounter Christ in the culture of our parish and specifically in the Eucharist?

You talk about four different things, praise, celebrating communal life and teaching, as well as worship, that all of these things can contribute to the Eucharistic culture. There is just one line I'd like to read by Pope Benedict XVI from the *Sacramentum Caritatis*. *"In the sacrament of the Eucharist, Jesus shows us in particular the truth about the love that is the very essence of God. It is this Evangelical truth that challenges each of us and our whole being. For this reason, the church, which finds in the Eucharist the very center of her life, is constantly concerned to proclaim to all that God is love precisely because Christ has become for us the food of truth. The church turns to every man and woman inviting them freely to accept the gift of God."*

Talk a little bit about this idea of the Eucharist being celebrated, remembered, and made present in the Mass.

**Tim O'Malley:** The Mass is integral to Catholic life; this seems obvious and patent. If folks don't go, it does kind of presume a lack of involvement in ecclesial life. Mass is really a complex practice, this prayer practice really. Father, you noted your ministry is to prayer and I think the Mass is a prayer but not Prayer 101 necessarily, it's actually pretty advanced. It has lots of different styles of prayer. The sacrifice of Christ that's made present but the sacrifice of our lives in return. There is a contemplative wonder before the presence of the Lord made manifest in all sorts of ways: In the word that is proclaimed, in the priest, in the assembly at song, as the Second Vatican Council notes, especially in the true presence of Christ in the Eucharist.

One of the things that I have grown concerned about is an analogy like this: I've been married for 17 years and I remember when I first got married, I sort of look often at my wedding ring and think, "Wow, it's amazing that I'm married." All this time I was waiting for this moment but now I've been married for 17 years, and I think, "I'm married but I don't think often about it with much wonder at all."

One of the precarious dimensions of the Eucharist for Catholics is that we actually forget the wonder of it. It's not just a rite that the priest does on a Sunday morning or that we go to because we're obligated to do so. There the Lord comes to exercise the power of His resurrection anew. He lives, and dies, and He is raised anew in our lives here and now and He gives Himself to us as food to be intimately united to us so that we can go out to every end of the world and consecrate it back in love to the Father, to the merciful heart of the Father. This is our task.

I think about Eucharistic reverence and the church's commitment to reverence. This is what I am talking about. This is real. This is a very real thing that's happening. The Mass is a real sacrifice of Christ. It is His sacrifice. It is His true presence dwelling among us that precipitates and brings about communion with the church and thus the whole world.

So, we have to get the Mass right, which doesn't mean stodgy, and it doesn't mean obsession or feeling obsession over everything that might be wrong, but it means that you have to actually understand that it's real and true presence given to us.

**Fr. Michael Denk:** We had First Communion this weekend and I was with some parents, and we were talking about what we remembered from our own First Communion. I know for me, at least, a lot of times in childhood and growing up through my high school years I did go to Mass out of that obligation. I didn't really, in my mind, get that much out of it and I think that is what we often hear from people, at least they tell me as a priest, "Father I don't really get anything out of Mass." What would you say to address that?

**Tim O'Malley:** Yes, I hear that too. I think that there are a couple of issues to think about with this.

The first is that nobody wants to think about this, especially those of us who are involved very deeply in the heart of the church but if there are some people who aren't getting Mass or anything out of Mass, some self-examination is needed first. Is the preaching on fire with the love of Christ? Is the music an encounter with Our Lord? Does it sound like we are praying in the first place? It's easy to blame like, "Well people just don't care." Absolutely but start with me; physician heal thyself. I can start with myself so it's self-reflection to say, "Well can we actually do more out of the Mass?" On the other hand, as I said, the Mass is a kind of complicated prayer. It's like someone who goes to the gym but doesn't know how to use any of the machines saying, "I don't get anything going out to the gym." That's right, you don't. Instead of blaming you for it I should probably sit down and start to help you play the thing. If you don't get anything out of the Eucharistic Prayer, do you know the structure of the Eucharistic prayer and do you know what you are supposed to be doing at each moment and can I help you pray it better?

The homilies are boring, I often hear people say. Homilies should improve but have you prepared to encounter the Lord in Scripture before you arrive at Mass? That is something that you can do.

Then there is a third dimension which is this. I fell in love, I know my story is somewhat unique, through regularly going to the Mass and learning to pray the Mass. It's there that I met Him and that I fell in love with Him and therefore I keep going back to Mass to do that.

I think a lot of people who do not get a lot out of Mass don't yet know that they know Jesus Christ. They don't yet know that they have encountered Him. They don't know yet that they have needed Him and so they're happy that the Mass is like a nice little Sunday event in their lives, but it's God working with you. So, I think that in some ways ironically some of the best work we need to do for the Eucharistic Revival has nothing to do with the Mass itself or the Eucharist itself but inviting people to develop that personal relationship with The Lord that of course has lived out in the Eucharist. It's not to separate it to say, "The Mass is not a personal relationship with The Lord." It is, but you may not be able to recognize it right away until you have started from the beginning with learning to speak to Him and to be with Him and to wonder at Him. There are all sorts of ways to do that. I know your ministry is involved in that.

**Fr. Michael Denk:** Yes, that is my kind of call within the call to help people. You illustrate that so wonderfully in the book that the Mass they're connected so the more the people are growing in their

spiritual life, the more the people are serving then that is brought forward into the Mass; it just kindles all of that fire so much more so.

You talk about Eucharistic coherency, that we should have this coherency with the Eucharist, not only when we go to Mass on Sunday but in our lives throughout our week. You also said that *it's not reserved exclusively for politicians. Politicians should, if they're going to say that they're Catholic, they should follow the Catholic faith. It's true for all of us. Every individual Catholic and parish is to become Eucharistically coherent.* Then you use this phrase, *who we are, what we do finds its source in the Blessed Sacrament.* That reminds me of Cardinal **Rupe's** prayer, *what we fall in love with will decide everything for us.*

**Tim O'Malley:** This is a really important point for me because part of the Eucharistic Revival occurred initially around political discussions. A lot of people early on were asking me, "So is this like a secret way that the church is speaking to this and this politician?" I have to admit that I feel somewhat paralyzed by this because I'm a Roman Catholic Theologian. I'm not a politician. I actually have no political power at all or at least sort of no advanced political power. I vote and I represent, and I try to sort of be involved in governance of my own university in some way shape or form but that's it.

One of the things people forget about is when they say, "That person needs to get better, and that person needs to get better, and that person needs to get better." I am just reminded by Our Lord in the Gospels that says, "Pay attention to the boat in your own eye before you before you deal with the splinter in your neighbor's eye." I don't know if I am Eucharistically coherent. Being around the hungry and the thirsty makes me pretty uncomfortable and when I approach someone on the street in desperate need, my first response is not to drop everything to be with them. It's not even to drop everything and be with my kids; when my kids need me, it's not even that.

So, am I Eucharistically coherent? When I receive each week the Body and Blood of Jesus Christ and I say, "Amen", have I become what I've received? Do I recognize His hidden presence in all those who hunger and thirst for justice, for all those in need of Divine love wherever they are? I'll start there. If the whole church, by the way, started there, we would have actually quite a Eucharistic Revival. We wouldn't have to worry about this or that politician because we'd start with ourselves. If you do this to young people, one day they too will be politicians and they might in fact live out Eucharistic coherence.

To me, Eucharistic coherence is the task of every individual person baptized in Christ.

**Fr. Michael Denk:** You mentioned later on in the book too, that we come to Mass as well acknowledging that we're not coherent. We come to Mass always acknowledging our sins confessing our incoherence as we enter into Mass. Not that we're supposed to be settled in that but just to acknowledge the reality of that and to ask that God to heal us and transform us so that we do walk out of there more coherent.

**Tim O'Malley:** So different when we think how we normally think about apologies and gatherings where we think, "That one's at fault, that one's at fault, that one's at fault", but instead, "Mea culpa, mea culpa, mea maxima culpa", my fault. If it was just me saying that then that would be rather sad and sadistic, and I would hate myself. But when you have hundreds of people recognizing that it's not your fault, but it's my fault, the good news is that it's all our fault. It really is all our fault, and we must be

converted, and we need each other for this is right. That's why we rely on the angels and the saints to do so and each other our brothers and sisters in Christ.

**Fr. Michael Denk:** That brought me a lot of hope too with the division. I was talking to someone last night. In our country it seems to be that people are more associated with their political party than their Catholicism and that can really divide us, Priest, Bishops, lay people. Sometimes I'll hear Confessions and people will come in and describe one person as being the Antichrist and the next Confession comes in and the other person is the Antichrist, and you never know until the end who they are talking about.

It really did something in me just realizing that we all come together to celebrate Mass. We are all gathered there to celebrate together and to be joined there together as one.

**Tim O'Malley:** Yes, it is a way of coming to heads with this sort of polarization and this confusion of Catholic identity versus political identity. It's one of the gifts of being my age, 41, means I'm in between a couple of generations. I'm not a millennial but I am sort of a millennial; I'm not a Gen X but I'm sort of a Gen X. I live in between these generations and that when I went to Notre Dame one of the things that was pretty remarkable is as an undergrad 85% of people were going to Mass and we were all in it together but none of us necessarily share the same political perspectives, but there was a kind of unity that transcended that disunity. I've had so many professors here who challenged me to not let politics be my god but that it was the Eucharistic mystery of love that is at the heart of everything.

I feel like we've lost that as a social body right now and one of the gifts of the Revival is, can we bring it back and recognize that communion of love draws us together. It's not Twitter, and it's not with Twitter, which doesn't draw us together or anything else. It's only the source of love itself that can heal these wounds that are quite endemic on the body politics but also on the church's body right now in Christ.

**Fr. Michael Denk:** There is just something about coming together because we are so divided. Families are divided. You could say something that is very contentious and that can cause a great division in the family. If we can all come together around the Table of the Lord and really let that be what unites us and go there knowing that I'm going to go there with these people that I don't agree with but we are going to be united around Christ. That gave me a great deal of hope.

You were talking about wonder and awe before and there is a part where you talk about the reverence that is needed for this Revival. You define reverence as either *religio* or *venerazio*. *The word religion does not simply mean coherent systems of beliefs but means posture of awe and wonder before God. The religious act commences with reverent off-field worship. God is the center of what we do, not us.*

I want to have you comment a little bit on that as being the focus on the reverence of the Eucharist what that reverence means.

**Tim O'Malley:** When you use the word reverence, one of the dangers today is that you sort of jump right into the Liturgy wars that exists in fact and that's the division.

I am a post-conciliar Catholic. I was raised in the rites after Vatican II. I always think to myself I received my First Communion a little over ten years after the Councils released the New Liturgies and in fact, they're the source of my whole spiritual life. Yet, I've been to parishes that seem with the rites with

both, the extraordinary form and the reform rites to worship more themselves rather than The Lord comes to dwell among us.

We need a sense of reverence, not this religious practice alone or that religious practice alone, but it is a fundamental recognition that it's God who is active and therefore it's awe and wonder that probably involves silence, it probably involves stuff and material worship. It's not just an idea but it involves beauty, and it involves matter, and it involves attending to the best way that music ought to lift us up into the heart of God and it involves all these things. It doesn't mean reverence, especially for this Revival, everything has to be in Latin, or everything has to be distant. Reverence is awe in wonder before a God who is merciful enough to dwell among us and to take flesh among us. Awe and wonder are something we can be educated into and enter into.

**Fr. Michael Denk:** How can you educate somebody into awe and wonder?

**Tim O'Malley:** That's a good question. It's a project we're working on in my center linked to the education of children, but it takes a little bit of time and distance. You can't be frenetic in your activity. You kind of learn to slow down a little bit and pay attention. If I walk through the world all the time looking at my smartphone, it is probably harder for me to awe and wonder at anything, but if I don't and I'm looking at things that I notice, that little flower that sprouted and I can look at it and sort of wonder at it, in a church that might not be the most beautiful in the world. We have the churches we have and we're not going to spend 75 million to build a new church every time we get dissatisfied with our architectural space.

You know the way that incense rises up if we're attentive to it at Mass, is a vision of our prayers like rising up to The Father. If we're attentive to the way we hold hands because we're placing our very will into the hands of the Triune God, of The Father, The Son, and The Holy Spirit, we're giving ourselves over to the Lord that becomes an occasion of awe and wonder for me. It's this kind of formation into wonder and reverence, which of course, requires beautiful things, and it requires intentionality, and it requires all of that, but it doesn't exclusively being overwhelmed so that I don't understand what's going on so I'm reverent before it. There are all sorts of types of reverence and awe and wonder in our lives and God wants to come in all these ways to us.

**Fr. Michael Denk:** You cite the Directory for Catechesis reminding us, *at the center of every process of catechesis is the living encounter with Christ. According to the definitive aim of catechesis to put people not only in touch but in communion in intimacy with Jesus Christ. Only He can lead us to the love of The Father in The Spirit and make us share in the life of the Holy Trinity.*

It seems to me that He is the one that leads us to wonder and awe.

**Tim O'Malley:** Yes, that's what Pope Francis means in his recent letter on liturgical formation, which is a separate thing, but it is The Lord. It is The Lord and when He comes before us to do this for us then He is the one who leads us into awe.

That's the awe that the priests must have. The priests must have this awe before the great mystery that he has been invited to participate through his ordination and it is the same mystery that the people of God participate in.

**Fr. Michael Denk:** There's a section where you use these three terms repeatedly: memory, imagination and experience. Can you tell our listeners why those three things are important?

**Tim O'Malley:** When we think about the formation of a person for the Eucharist, it means not just telling them things about things. I often hear the word catechesis used in such a way that it almost seems like a violent act. Like, "I have to catechize that person." Sometimes my graduate students talk about it in my course on Catechetics. If we catechize them it's going to be great but what does that mean? You can't just tell human beings things and then they automatically believe it, otherwise doctors wouldn't have to work so hard. If you just say, "Listen, you have to give up eating 15,000 calories a day." I know that. I know it's true but it's hard to do. The church has always known this, and the church has talked about formation. Memory is linked to what are the narratives or images that we have as part of us that allow us to make sense of the world from the very beginning and that presumes, we're involved in a world from the beginning. We're praying in this world; we're paying attention to light and darkness and images. That's really what the church means by experience. We experience a world, we see it, we have questions about the world, but it enters into us, all that we've experienced in the world, enters into our memories. But we have to contemplate it and ask questions about it. It's not just going to Mass that's sufficient, but you have to wonder about it and say, "What does this mean for my life?" Then of course, there's will and practice and love. We have to grow more into loving and doing what's become part of our memory and imagination and our desires. We have to sort of desire that end to continue with an analogy that's already been sort of implicit.

We love things the more that we do them and come to understand them and know more about them. An example is, I haven't used this, I grew up, I hated country music. I actually liked country music but I grew up in the South, so sometimes I had to hate it to rebel against it but it turns out I really liked it, and the first decision I had to make was to actually recognize that I liked it. From there, I started looking at it and studying its history and wondering about it and its connections to other things.

Not even the same way that the Eucharist can function in our lives. We have to love The Lord who is present and then a whole world opens up of memory, of questions of the church's tradition and experience of wanting to know more about it from there. We spend our free time thinking about it and wondering about it. That's what good adult Eucharistic Catechesis should do not just tell people about things, but to that sort of deeper wonder.

**Fr. Michael Denk:** I like that you gave a practical example the more beautiful Eucharistic signs we behold. So, during our week if we can keep our eyes open to these Eucharistic signs how God may be revealing Himself to us discernible in scripture, in art, music, literature, poetry. All of this if we're open to that wonder and awe and hearing God's voice all throughout the week, the more we will be attuned to seeing what is happening in the Mass.

**Tim O'Malley:** It is an awareness of God's hidden presence. Saint John Henry Newman has this beautiful sermon on the Eucharist, or the hidden presence of Our Lord and he refers to the hidden presence in the sacrament but also the scriptures in the hungry and thirsty, so we have to get into the practice of looking for Our Lord everywhere in our lives and to be grateful for it.

I thought about it this morning. It was spitting this cold rain and I was praying *Sun and moon, bless the Lord; stars of heaven, bless the Lord; every shower, bless the Lord.* To recognize God's presence in this

rain, that I did not want by the way to clarify, is nonetheless suddenly to enter into that presence. To get to know it and to recognize to be grateful that this rain is here is to recognize those hidden surprising ways that God's presence is coming to me every day and then at Mass I'm even better able to recognize that presence.

**Fr. Michael Denk:** One of the things I like to tell people about their prayer life too is that sometimes people will tell me when I teach meditative and contemplative prayer they say, "Father, I pray all the time." And I'll say, "Well, do you actually spend any solid time in prayer, Holy Hour, 15 minutes, 10 minutes?" A lot of times the answer is no and I think what the saints have revealed to us is if we don't spend some focused time in prayer really, really focusing on God, we might not really be praying as much as we think outside of that with God.

A lot of times we may talk, and people even say, "I've talked to God all the time." But I'll say, "Do you hear His voice? Do you hear Him speak to you?" They'll kind of look at me and say, "Well, no. I just talked to Him."

You mentioned this when under the topic of understanding the art of meditation, and you do this specifically by looking at *intellectus*. *Understanding is the English translation of the Latin word intellectus. Intellectus refers to the human capacity to recognize the sense of something that we behold, and it relates to meaning.* So, it's really beholding something, and I like you just to tell them a little bit about your encounter with your daughter's voice when she used to say, "Daddy" and just how that was meaningful.

**Tim O'Malley:** It's funny, Father Michael, having authored a number of books I actually don't entirely remember this particular moment in the book. I'm a little embarrassed. Could you tell me.

**Fr. Michael Denk:** *The first voice I often hear is my daughter's. The joy of calling home though it is not just hearing her voice, this voice has meaning to listen . . .*

**Tim O'Malley:** OK yes, I remember. This is wonderful.

When we think about intellect, we think about fancy smart things and that is not what we're talking about; it's recognition, it's insight, it's understanding. When I hear my daughter's voice, I understand it is her. I have an intellectual insight that it's her but that's not abstract, that's very particular it's the part of our relationship and it's a part of our long history and memory with one another and that we've spent time with each other and then I've actually come to know her more and recognize her more in all of that. In that inside is made in that particular voice.

One of the things we're talking about with understanding the hidden presence of Christ in the Eucharist, I didn't write about this exactly in this part of the book but if you think about understanding the Eucharist, people often mean you have to know the niceties of the Doctrine of Transubstantiation which is helpful for all sorts of reasons, but that is not actually going to lead to faith necessarily. Many people can understand the Doctrine and not believe that He is there or understand in any way, shape, or form that He's there through faith. So, in some ways you come to recognize and understand the presence of Christ, the Eucharistic Mystery not simply by reading every book or watching every video you can watch by every famous evangelist describing what the Eucharist is in its history, although again I find that helpful.

On the other hand, it's this other kind of understanding that's at stake, which is well, there He is, right there is my beloved. I could tell my whole story of faith in this encounter with Christ in the Eucharist from moments of desolation to moments of great joy throughout my life.

Father Michael, thanks for reminding me of what I actually talked about.

**Fr. Michael Denk:** It's always helpful to remember. I'm trying to think of the phrase that you used of how individuals or individual families, or individual cultures have their own devotions outside of Mass and I think in our American culture we lose some of that, some of the cultural religion, religious aspects some of the traditions like small tea traditions that families may have and how important those are for families to pray together. We focus on the Eucharist being the source and summit and so Mass is the ultimate prayer that we come together to do but families should also have their own prayer life that they develop and nurture within their own household.

Some of the teaching I do is teaching families how to pray and meditate and contemplate together.

What would you say to the families out there that maybe don't have that culture of personal prayer or piety within their family, and they are hearing this for the first time? What could they do to kind of explore how they can pray?

My thing after reading your book is that we all need to be creative like these things that were cultural and didn't come out of a vacuum. Somebody came up with a creative idea, started doing it and it became meaningful to their family in their culture. Any practical tips for people?

**Tim O'Malley:** It depends on the age and where you are in life, but the church's traditional devotions and prayer are really great with young children.

I have a profound devotion as a person to the Divine Office. It's where I find the deepest part of my spiritual life but I also have a six-year-old and for me to say, "Maggie, it's time for us to play pray the Liturgy of the Hours. We're going to do the Office of Vigils." It's not exactly the thing that's going to work. How do we find these sort of moments to pray in our and our families? What works with young children? Stuff like materials. Candles and rosaries are really helpful because rosaries are material and you can touch them. Icons and images are things that matter, music and song. Is there a basic song that you can sing? My children grew up learning and actually liked the Marian Antiphons that the church sings in Latin. Not because they know Latin but because they just know it. When it's Regina Chali time, it's Regina Chali time.

With young children there's also the other extra liturgical stuff throughout the liturgical year. There are ways of marking the festivity of Advent with an Advent wreath on the table. During Lent, we light a candle and we're a little bit silent in prayer for a bit. During Easter there are the additional icons, and they do Catechesis to the Good Shepherd. There are Alleluias that they buried during the beginning of Lent and now they're back. These are the things that capture the imagination of small children.

As our kids get older, prayer starts to deepen, and they have deeper prayers. When you're working with teenagers, particularly in a home, my practical advice is just be honest about your own prayer life with them; be authentic about it that you struggle in your own prayer life. You witness to it but you know why you pray.

We did a study out of my center once upon a time out of the institute I work at on, “What’s effective for passing on faith in homes and in families amongst Catholics?” It’s parents who can explain why they’re doing what they’re doing but they are doing things. So, do things and be able to explain why it matters to you and then of course as you get older than that enters deeper life of prayer that unfolds as you get older.

My other advice, especially for parents, is yes, do all this with your family but find time yourself, really. It’s like my time praying with my daughter, my son, and my wife doesn’t replace the time that Tim needs at 5:00 am and that’s the time I need and that keeps me as a decent father and husband. I mean average, I should say average, father and husband if I don’t have that. You can’t do everything but stuff and that’s the kind of cultural Catholicism that when it gets lost . . . A lot of people have said things like “Cultural Catholicism it’s good, it’s over. Now is the time for our Evangelical zeal” and I’m like “Yes, sort of because we need some and practical people need practical stuff and that Cultural Catholicism matter to people. Those processions and that material stuff go back not to that material stuff but with the recognition that it matters in a new way. It’s not superstition, it’s not just the way you’re controlling God but stuff matters. Matter matters as I tell my students.

Not everybody is going to be Catholic. It’s not Catholic college. College doesn’t equal salvation so it’s not just intellectual, it’s not just advanced meditation practices, it’s often starting with the basics and some people will spend most of their lives entering into the deepest Communion with Our Lord through the basics and we should not poo poo those.

**Fr. Michael Denk:** You made it very clear in the book that that will only enhance the Liturgy, the Eucharist when people have those.

**Tim O’Malley:** I hope so. We have this kind of narrative once upon a time that these are at odds with each other like private and I worry about it.

**Fr. Michael Denk:** I understand that. I remember when I was in the Seminary it was much like that spirituality of the Liturgy, Eucharistic Liturgy and Liturgy of the Hours and everything else was kind of not highlighted or emphasized. Then they kind of came around, more after I left, but to realize that a lot of us priests didn’t grow up with devotions and so when we get to the parishes, we would kind of be expected by the people to have or know some devotions. They are doing that in the Seminary now.

I think one of the big caveats was one of the Spiritual Directors was just clear that the church does not mandate pious devotions. We should do pious devotions, but the church isn’t going to tell you what you should or shouldn’t do, it’s really up to the layperson themselves to foster that.

**Tim O’Malley:** And that’s why it is a search for holiness and devotion should serve the end of leading one to holiness. As I say, there’s about as many ways of being Catholic as there are ways of being human. I think that is the gift of the Church. Part of the Eucharistic flourishing of the church is in the General Directory for Catechesis used to talk about that the church really in Catechesis is doing a *Radicchio* and a *Traditio*, a handing over and receiving back or *Traditio*, or to hand on the tradition but then we receive back something marvelous in return.

Mexican Catholics and Puerto Rican Catholics and Cuban Catholics and Catholics in Cleveland, Ohio, have each given back to the church a particular way of being Catholic that brings us into deeper

communion with The Lord. The more that we encounter all those ways, the better off we are as a church.

**Fr. Michael Denk:** I Once asked somebody in the seminary about learning and he said, “Find somebody that is passionate about it.” I’m just encouraging users that if they don’t know what to do for a devotional with their family, find somebody that’s passionate about it and just ask what they do and maybe you can learn from them. Be creative.

I was thinking even last night if I were a parent, I’m not for kids bring toys to church but if they were going to, I wonder what it would be like to every week go through the gospels and try to see if you could find something in your house or in your world that would represent that and that would be the toy that they would bring or the image that they would bring. Yes, but to be creative with it.

Fostering off this from families is the Eucharistic vocation at work. This is something that has become more and more separated from our faith in our work life. We just celebrated St. Joseph the Worker and what we do in our work is in itself a vocation, so there is a Eucharistic quality to our labor.

You quote Joseph Youngman. He says that *for it is real men of flesh and blood who are caught up on the process of the liturgy. It is their voices, their goings and comings which has become part of this sacred action. It is the bread from the work a day world which is carried to the altar.* Why did you include this part about the worker?

**Tim O’Malley:** Part of it is that I started listening to parishes and I realized work is almost never mentioned in my parish. It’s a very odd thing. Here are the faithful gathered, the baptized faithful, roughly 60 perhaps sometimes up to 75% of their lives, even more perhaps, are being spent laboring. Whether that is in an office, whether that’s in a factory and I think the church has forgotten. It’s like a divide, the gap between faith and life is the gap between on Sunday I go to Mass then I spend the rest of my time laboring at work.

But the early Liturgical Movement in the 20<sup>th</sup> Century was very clear that the Liturgy should have some sort of impact on the lives of workers. Part of it was in factories. In the earliest days of the 20<sup>th</sup> Century, thinking about the Liturgy is the heart of your life, teachers and doctors and lawyers and nurses were getting together to talk about the Mass together, not in parishes by the way, but in their workplaces. So, they were gathering together to sort of do this and I think this is just where the church has forgotten that it’s certainly the dignity of work.

I have a student coming to office hours imminently. When she enters my office that is part of my work. It is part of my obligation and yet there I worship The Lord. I make of my body a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable to The Lord as Paul says. How I greet her, how I care about her, their students, if they break down and they’re crying and they’re concerned how I respond. Am I living out the Gospel and the Eucharistic mystery that I received in that space? I might need mentorship on how to do this and I might need help to do this and I might have to understand work and even the tedium of work, the sort of worst parts of work as part of this offering.

I hope that the Eucharistic Revival has people in the church talk a little bit more about the connection about what you do at work and what you do at the parish. How you work, the dignity of that task, even if not all of work is going to be total self-fulfillment as many of my Gen Z students want. Sometimes you

work for the sake of caring for your family and that's why you do it. That offering of love that you make is a sacrifice of love and that is why I love yesterday's Feast of St. Joseph the Worker. There's the craftsmanship of being a carpenter but there is the fact that whatever he did, he did for the sake of worship the Blessed Virgin Mary and for Christ and this is the gift of love.

I especially think, when we talk about men, the lack of talking about work particularly has been harmful for the church's relationship with men who often find a lot of their personal identity. It's a space the church has to work at and evangelize that.

**Fr. Michael Denk:** That's a great insight because I also think when you talk about divides, a lot of times in the work life that's a division. Our work is here, our home is here, you leave it at work which is what you have to do to have healthy boundaries, but you are still you with Jesus in your work. So, you're still sanctifying everything you do, as you mentioned, with your body you are still representing Christ in the world and also encountering Christ if we had that wonder and awe.

You conclude that chapter by saying that *Everything that is authentically human can find a place in the Eucharist*. I think it's a great summation of the book. Really, everything we do our whole lives our hobbies, our cares, our work, our play, all of that is drawn into the Eucharist. Maybe sometimes when people say, "I'm not getting a lot out of Mass" is they're not realizing how connected God has been to them all week and that's what we're bringing to Him and offering to Him when we come and celebrate.

The part I wrote, "Wow" on, we talked about this earlier but, it was about some politics and William Kavanaugh said that the *"The Eucharist is not simply a promise of future bliss outside historical time in the biblical and patristic witness. We find the Eucharist is an earthly practice of peace and reconciliation. Paul reminds the Corinthians of continuing divisions between rich and poor and suggests that some of them are sick and dying now because they have partaken of the Eucharist without first reconciling the divisions. Where peace is lacking, the Eucharist appears as a sign of judgment requiring that people reconcile before a true Eucharist can take place.*

Pretty powerful.

**Tim O'Malley:** Yes, it's an invitation for conversion. Am I an agent of peace? It's still the Sacred Heart. At Notre Dame there are these stained-glass windows that people don't often see because they are no longer illuminated with light. When you first walk into the church, you open the doors, there are these stained-glass windows and it's an image of folks burning a fire; one is the fires of Purgatory, and one is the fires of Hell. But it's an invitation before you enter to say, "Well where am I in this? Am I an agent of peace? Am I an agent of the monstrosities of Hell?" By that I mean do I provoke division, do I lead to discord in the world? Do I contribute to the injustice of the world?

Another image I really like is in the Sistine Chapel which has the largest altar piece in some sense in the world and it's right behind the altar that all Cardinals are at celebrating Mass for the election of a Pope. There's an image of those in hell and there's an image of those moving towards heaven. The Eucharist has to be an agent of peace and if we are not agents of peace, we're not yet living out the Eucharistic life where Benedict XVI said, "A Eucharist that does not result in the concrete practice of love is intrinsically fragmented." It is a judgment to us. We can do better and I'm convicted by that and I'm

struggling to do it myself and that I think is part of the Revival that could be most healing of the American church today.

**Fr. Michael Denk:** For me the insight that you've brought about is that, because there's some division in every parish, if we can at least just come together.

I was in Rwanda where the Genocide happened and I'm sure it was 99% Catholic, and they were divided into Hutus and Tutsi and mass slaughters. I remember meeting a Tutsi who had lost a lot of her family and she would go back to Mass and there would be the Hutus right next to her and they would have to offer each other The Sign of Peace.

I think for us if we can at least come together and really let Mass be what brings us to unity and to peace.

I just want to finalize with one line from the end of the book here, *but we must learn to become what we have received so this book has invited you and your parish into a process. It has not bestowed all the answers, the hope is that though reading this book you will be able to initiate a Eucharistic Revival in your corner of the cosmos; one that leads men and women who are otherwise suspicious of Ecclesiastical belonging to take more than a second look. Perhaps they will come, see and stay with us or they might recognize in worshipping with us in our parishes. That their hearts were burning all along and just maybe our church is where hearts are continually aflame with the love beyond all telling. At least that is what Jesus promised to us.*

So beautiful. Thank you very much.

**Tim O'Malley:** Thank you, Father Michael.

**Fr. Michael Denk:** Can you let our viewers know that you have lots of resources online. What is the best way to go to these Eucharistic resources?

**Tim O'Malley:** If you Google: McGrath Institute for Church Life University of Notre Dame Center for Liturgy, you will find it.

**Fr. Michael Denk:** Thank you so much. Anything else you want to say?

**Tim O'Malley:** No. Thanks so much for having me and amending blessings as the Revival unfolds for each parish.

**Fr. Michael Denk:** Thank you Tim and thanks for everything you've done in your work behind the scenes to get us going on this Revival.

The Lord be with you. Almighty God bless you with The Father, and The Son, and the Holy Spirit come down on all of you and remain with you forever. Amen.