

I believe that our faith is a treasure which demands to be shared.

# Love ONE ANOTHER

BY: ARCHBISHOP JEROME E. LISTECKI



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Dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ,

It is always amazing to me the “popular” interest in Ash Wednesday, the beginning of Lent. It is a penitential season when one hears the stark words, “You are dust and to dust you shall return.” The words remind us of our mortality and the need to examine our lives in relationship to God as “the” priority in our lives. We dutifully permit the minister to mark our foreheads with the sign of the cross or, in some instances, a more ancient form of sprinkling the ashes on the head. Then we walk around the entire day with the black ash adorning our foreheads.

There are very few opportunities for us to profess our faith in our modern culture. Perhaps part of the popularity of Ash Wednesday is that we are called to demonstrate our association with our Catholic/Christian faith. On that day, I view telecasts of news shows or talk shows with interest, watching for the black blotch of ash on the foreheads of the anchor, host or sports commentator. For me, ashes are a badge of honor. For others, they might be a challenge to them about their relationship to God and the mysteries of the unseen world.

Recently, we gathered at the Brookfield Conference Center for the 2023 Pallium Lecture. Over 1,500 people listened to a presentation by Msgr. James Shea, in which he presented a reflection on the real presence of the Eucharist and its centrality to our Catholic faith. The Catechism of the Catholic Faith (1324) states: *The Eucharist is “the source and summit of the Christian life.” “The other sacraments and indeed all ecclesiastical ministries and works of the apostolate, are bound up with the Eucharist and are oriented toward it. For in the blessed Eucharist is contained the whole spiritual good of the Church, namely Christ himself our Pasch.”* To our eyes, it is bread and wine, but we know that it is truly Christ’s body and blood – the mystery of the unseen world.

Msgr. Shea is well known for his book that examines for us the fact that we live in a post-Christian culture. Things we took for granted can no longer be assumed. Instead, he posits we need to return to Apostolic witness. We have taken for granted that our culture embodies our Christian morals and values. But for decades now, Christianity and religion itself has been characterized as obsolete, an obstacle to progressive thinking, and even a danger to those who declare a freedom to choose to destroy the unborn, deny the definition of marriage between a man and a woman, or uphold the arbitrary decision to choose one’s gender. His presentation challenged the audience to embrace God’s

mystery, which is rejected by the “scientism” of the world: a world view that rejects the unseen or spiritual.

For almost two decades as a bishop and over two decades as a priest, I have constantly pointed out the lack of definition in our Catholic Institutions. In many hospitals, crosses and crucifixes have disappeared, and even in our Catholic schools, religious paintings of saints and icons are replaced with scenes of nature or popular modern figures.

In the past, there were religious sisters in habits, religious brothers, and priests in collars pacing the halls. Now, we must ask what makes us different. What defines us as Catholic?

I offer that today that we must be intentionally Catholic. Do we have something to say and offer to our society? I believe that we do. We can not be shy about who we are. This led me to always establish “Catholic Identity” as one of my three priorities.

I want converts to Catholicism. I believe that our faith is a treasure which demands to be shared. If we truly care about our brothers and sisters, then we would want them to have the very best of what we know to be the faith offered by Jesus Christ through the institution of His Church. We must do so by invitation and example.

Taking up the Apostolic challenge by Msgr. Shea (Acts 11:26), “It was in Antioch that they were first called Christians.” Let us spread the message to LOVE ONE ANOTHER.

Sincerely,

***Most Reverend Jerome E. ListECKi***  
***Archbishop of Milwaukee***



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### **Archbishop 2023 Lenten Campaign**

This year, consider a donation in support of the mission activities of Fr. Rod Ermatinger, who pastors six parishes on the Blackfeet Indian Reservation in Helena, Montana. The parishes are comprised of over 12,000 Native Americans, many of whom are baptized Catholics, in roughly 3,000 square miles. This year’s Lenten almsgiving gives us the ability to be missionaries right here in our backyard. **Give your support today!**