

Sacred Name for the Pastorate

Right now, the name for our pastorate, the pastorate consisting of the 7 parishes of: Bridgewater, Emery, Alexandria, Humboldt, Montrose, Salem, and Epiphany, is simply: Pastorate 16. The bishop has asked that each pastorate choose a sacred name. Having a pastorate name will not affect the parish/location names – we already have a pastorate name, it's just that right now it's "16" and a sacred name needs to be chosen. Even when a sacred name for the pastorate is chosen, St Ann's in Humboldt, for example, will still be known as St Ann's. Choosing a pastorate name does not change that. It's just that now the name of their pastorate will be the chosen sacred name, instead of "16" (there were 25 pastorates formed – each one was given a number from 1 to 25; they were numbered based on location, starting in the farthest northwest corner of the diocese, working down; the "Mobridge pastorate" is Pastorate 1).

What constitutes a sacred name and who gets to say? The Church herself does. The diocese has specified that sacred names must follow the laws for naming specified in Canon Law, which say: "The name can be:

- the name of the Trinity, or a name for Christ, invoked in the liturgy,
- a mystery of his [Jesus'] life,
- the name of the Holy Spirit,
- a name for Mary, invoked under a title for her used in the liturgy
- the name of a holy angel
- the name of a canonized saint, as it appears in the Roman martyrology (or appendix)
- the name of a Blessed."

That's it, period. The name must conform to this naming standard. The name chosen will be submitted to the bishop, who then must approve it. Once he approves a name, it will be final.

A big question, of course, is how to choose a pastorate name – the practical means? A committee, consisting of 2 members of each parish, was formed to help with "pastoral planning" and this committee took up the question of how to go about selecting a name in a reasonably manageable way. It was decided that the committee would select 3 or 4 names and then have parishioners vote on them using a Google survey. However, the survey also allows for a person to submit their own suggestion. Thus, the final selection of name won't necessarily be based strictly on "vote counts" but allows for the possibility of selecting a different one if it seems especially fitting.

Selection of the 3 sacred names proposed in the survey was not willy-nilly, nor was it a matter of personal favorites. The question considered was:

- what is needed in the world, our country, our diocese, our pastorate today, and then
- what saint or other sacred name will provide a good example for that which is needed? What saint (or sacred name) would be good to meditate on and learn from, especially in our current time?

I would encourage everyone to think in these terms when completing the survey.

With this in mind, the committee proposed the following 3 saints:

1. St Mary Magdalene

Modern times have seen a great exodus from faith, from God. Man's return to God begins with repentance. There is no other way. Even many Catholics have strayed from the practice of regular Confession and thus from continuing conversion. Repentance is the first step in forging relation with our Lord. Our Lord Himself is emphasizing a great need for modern man to return to His mercy, hence, for example, the relatively new Feast of Divine Mercy. As mentioned last week, on Divine Mercy Sunday we had about 8 hours of Confessions on Divine Mercy Sunday; this is the work of our Lord, a result of His grace – a reflection of His will. One reason for the choice of St Mary Magdalene, then, is to hold up this great example of repentance ***and*** our Lord's great love for those who repent. She is perhaps *the* Scriptural example of both.

While St Mary Magdalene is a great example of repentance, she is also a great but simple example of love of our Lord *and*...what that is like. After the Resurrection and before our Lord manifested Himself to her, we see

her searching for our Lord, absolutely fixed on finding Him, nothing else matters. This is how we are meant to be: seeking Him with earnest: as long as I have the Lord, everything is alright and if I don't, nothing is right.

St Mary Magdalen is also a great example of fidelity to our Lord. She was one of few who stood at the foot of the Cross of our Lord. Great repentance leads to great fidelity. "Those who are forgiven much, love much."

She is also an example of readiness to accept instruction from our Lord: stop clinging to Me. She is ready to accept His teaching even when (perhaps) she doesn't really understand it fully – the how or why. She is thus also a model of trust in the Lord – the inscription that our Lord put at the bottom of His Divine Mercy Image... which is, once again, especially for our current times.

The Church herself is also drawing more attention to the example of this saint in our own times since her "feast day" was recently elevated from the level of memorial to the level of feast. As a "Scriptural saint," she will also be known by most everyone. Thus, it seems that meditation on St Mary Magdalen would be a great aid to any pastorate and the hope would be that through her example and intercession our pastorate would become a model of humble repentance, great fidelity, and love of our Lord.

2. St Peter the Apostle

As our first Pope, one of the first things St Peter brings to mind is the Church herself, *as established by Christ*. The subject (or theology) of the Church herself is a central and essential one for both Catholics and non-Catholics today. A lack of or wrong understanding of the Church is a lack of or misunderstanding of Christ Himself, of the Mystical Body of Christ with Christ as the head. St Peter as first pope beckons us to the true nature of the Church: that it is not a man-made organization but rather a Divine Institution; while it has a human dimension, it is not just another human organization that can be morphed into whatever I want it to be; that God has real authority and has given real authority to His Church; that there is a Magisterium of the Church that has real teaching authority; that I could not know, for example, that the Eucharist is the full person of Jesus except that the Church tells me so. It has become so common today for Catholics to believe that "my opinion" is supreme and therefore I can pick and choose, amongst the definitive teachings of the Church, what I believe that it has even now been given a name: Cafeteria Catholicism. How sad it is when a particular form of loss faith is so common that it even has its own name. Just like the whole physical body suffers when one organ goes awry, so too the human dimension of the Church suffers today because of this cancer. St Peter would indeed serve as a great beacon for any pastorate to see the goodness of the Church as our Lord created it. If "the question of the Church" is settled, many things are settled and the person is then ready to progress toward the Lord; if not, they are not.

You are Peter and upon this **rock** I will build My Church. There is so much instability in the world, evil seems to be rising – is there anywhere I can go to truly be with the Lord, is there a rock bed somewhere that will never be moved, that will remain firm to the very end of time? There is much fear and anxiety in life, is there anywhere secure? Peter as a patron brings to mind our Lord's promise that He Himself has guaranteed His Church. Peter as rock reminds us of the immovability of God. With Peter as a patron, we will look at this rock and respond: Yes, Jesus, I trust in You.

There is, however, one more aspect of St Peter, a more subtle one that might at first escape our attention. While this is true of all the Apostles, St Peter especially teaches us with his life. And one thing he teaches us is that there is a **progression to the Lord** and that that progression continues throughout our whole lives. In fact, the good teachers of the faith, using Revelation, point out 3 general stages of conversion – and these good teachers have used, as one source, the lives of the Apostles to draw this out of what God has revealed. We see Peter's many failures, waverings, and so on, and yet each time he comes back to the Lord, renewed and strengthened until finally he gives up his life in a most brutal way for the sake of our Lord. Peter is also a model of repentance. It is said that Peter wept so much after his denial of our Lord that there were furrows in his cheeks from the tears. Yes, St Peter can serve as an excellent patron and example for our times.

3. St Francis of Assisi

If it's one saint who has perhaps been badly misrepresented and caricatured in our times it is St Francis of Assisi. He all too often seems to be portrayed as just some sort of childish, hapless doofus, a simpleton, who stood around in a garden all day playing with birds, fluttering away the days. St Francis was anything but that.

St Francis is, first of all, a model of real conversion – a good model for our times. Prior to his conversion, did Francis ever stop going to Mass? There seems to be no indication of that. Did he go to Confession? Maybe – he generally went through the motions of “religion” but that was it. Francis' father was a fairly well to do businessman and prior to his real conversion Francis lived a vain, pointless, frivolous life. He lived for a good time, for nice clothes, for socializing, and so on. That was it. But then when Francis entered into conversion, he turned to the Lord with his whole heart, mind, soul, and strength. As a patron of any pastorate, Francis would serve first of all as a model of what real conversion is like, what it means, what it entails – it's not just showing up for Mass once a week on Sundays while staring out the window thinking about the worldly allurements that I'll get back to as soon as it's over. No, that was Francis prior to his conversion, not *St* Francis.

Most people know that St Francis is the founder of the Order of Friars Minor (OFM), commonly known as the Franciscans. This arose rather spontaneously, brought about more by the will of God than Francis' own direct intention. As people began to gather around Francis and stay with him, Francis gave them many instructions, some written, some oral. From these instructions, one can begin to grasp the true mindset of Francis and what real conversion is like. Was Francis just a big softy who approved of everything? Let's see.

One characteristic of anyone who enters into real conversion is a deep love, appreciation, and care for the Holy Eucharist, and this is very evident in St Francis. Francis, for example, warned the Franciscan clergy that they would go to hell if they were careless in the purification of the sacred vessels. When he was taken to a priest who was living immorally, he fell to his knees, kissed the priest's hands, and said these are the hands that bring me Christ (the priest, incidentally, immediately repented). His instructions/writings are a flourishing example of the mind of someone consumed with the Lord. He wrote about the evil of self-will, about virtue – especially humility, obedience and so on. He used a human skull to meditate upon death, the shortness of this life, and the true purpose of this life. Our Lord also taught through St Francis in a bodily way. St Francis was the first, as far as anyone knows, to bear, visibly, the full stigmata of our Lord. Our Lord reminds us through His servant Francis that patient endurance of suffering for the sake of the Beloved is true love and thus what we are called to. His penitential life is a great example for our times. What is real conversion actually like? St Francis serves as a great example and as such, can certainly serve as a great patron for any pastorate in our own times.

Once again, as you think about a sacred name for the pastorate, try to think in these terms: what is really needed in the world, our country, and so on – and what name/saint/mystery would really help to bring this out. Spend some time in prayer, asking our Lord to bring about His holy will, which will help guide the pastor as well. Finally, also bear in mind that we can't really go wrong with a sacred name; like choosing readings for (say) a wedding or funeral, you can't go wrong with any of Sacred Scripture – so it is with sacred names as well. So if you don't get your first choice, remember that the saints, along with our Lord, the angels, and the whole Trinity form one, single, and exultant communion! Nothing is lost with any choice of a sacred name.

For those who do not use the internet, you can call the office if you like and submit your “vote” and/or suggestion. For those who do use the internet, though – please use the online survey as this will provide an immediate tally and keep “votes” / suggestions from getting lost. It's one submission per adult, only for those in pastorate 16. A (perhaps shortened) version of this document will be inserted into the bulletin this week.

This is a link to the survey, the same one provided in the body of the email. Just click on it, complete the survey, and **hit submit**: https://docs.google.com/forms/d/e/1FAIpQLSfqBUu-DigCSVZcdYvjHM8ZleYYBH_CuBDW8zSHrj0u8GEUXA/viewform?usp=sf_link

All responses have to be in by Thursday, April 25, 2024. Thank you and God bless you, Fr Kuhn.