

# RELIGIOUS BULLETIN

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## 1917--JOHN FITZGERALD KENNEDY--1963

35th President of the United States

**As the true faith united him with the body of the faithful on earth, may God's mercy unite him with the company of the choirs of angels in heaven.**

"For with regard to thy faithful, O Lord, life is changed, not taken away, and the house of their earthly dwelling being destroyed, an eternal dwelling in heaven is obtained."

Preface of the Mass for the Dead

It is altogether proper, my brothers, that at this moment in the offering of the Sacrifice, we should pause to consider the tragic event of Friday: the murder of our President. It is true that here we are concerned with the reality of grace. We are involved in the vast reaches of the Redemption which advances steadily and calmly to its appointed fulfillment. We are not concerned with the life of nature, with the civil order where the weary struggle of reason against force and violence goes forward with its chancy consequences. Yet between these two public orders, that of grace and that of nature, a close relationship exists. The church depends upon the state for the preservation of the order necessary for its own proper work. And on Friday, the state, the body politic, received a grievous wound.

It is not fitting, in this public gathering, to advert to the personal tragedy of the man Kennedy and his family. They should be allowed to mourn privately without intrusion, even from the sympathetic.

But the man Kennedy was also our President. He held the mightiest title in the history of man: Mr. President, the man who lives in that white house on Pennsylvania Avenue. And his death by violence intimately involves all of us. For although we are met here as the People of God, we are also members of the body politic over which he ruled. He was endowed with that office by our consent.

He represented us. His actions were ours. And so his death, in some way, was ours too. If he had died as men die, in the normal course of events, there would have been no tragedy. But his death by violence gives that event a new dimension. It becomes a wound in the office he held. We have a President. The office goes forward. But it has been injured. It is now stained with the blood of a fourth President. And that injury can be healed only by political temperance, by the quiet discussion of political differences, by due reverence for authority once authority has been invoked. The unhappy man who assaulted our President was an epitome of all that is wrong in our society; contempt for authority, the confusion of freedom with license, envy of the great, resentment at just punishment, these are the things that seemed to motivate his action. And so we share in the blame to the extent that we share in and advance the attitudes of intemperance that motivated him.

Beyond this, however, there is a further dimension, a further consideration. Our President was one of us. In a way most of our fellow citizens cannot understand, he was truly one of us. The authority he held, he held with the consent of the American people. And we are the proximate source of that authority. But in the ultimate sense, that authority came from God the creator of us all. And no one can hold authority such as our President has held without being touched by its source, without experiencing something of the transcendent origin of all authority. And it follows that he must have experienced in a special way the dread burden of such authority. Here was a man whose decisions affected the entire human race; and he had to decide in the presence of human fallibility. Surely he must have paced the floor at night, hounded by the thought that he could be wrong, that a wiser course of action was possible if only he had the wisdom to see it. This is the ultimate burden of an authority such as he held. Such a burden either deepens a man or it destroys him. But he was not destroyed by it. Against the might of his office there stood always the limiting influence of his worship. He was one of us, my brothers. He knelt before the altar. He too said "Kyrie eleison, Lord have mercy on me." He too identified himself in the offering of the sacrifice as a creature, as a son of God, a brother of Christ. He lived and moved in the destiny of the People of God, under the shelter of the sacraments.

Tomorrow a priest will consign his body to earth and his soul to God. And the ancient prayer will be said for our President as it has been and will always be said for each of us. "O God, to whom it belongs ever to have mercy and to spare, we humbly beseech Thee for the soul of Thy servant John." And so our President will come to his last and greatest title, one that exists beyond the pomp and circumstance of earthly life, one that has no taint of burden, or struggle: "Thy servant John;" simpler even than Mr. President. Let us pray, my brothers, that while we must suffer for the violence of his death, for him it was what death always is for those who love

God, a release and a consummation. Much was given to him; therefore much was expected. But he ruled according to his best lights. And he died a noble death in the line of duty. Surely this day he enjoys a new and better kingdom.

--Stanley J. Parry, C.S.C.

(Sermon delivered at the 11:00 Mass in Sacred Heart Church on Sunday, November 24, 1963)

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THANKSGIVING DAY in its origin was a truly Christian feast. The Pilgrims who instituted the day of thanksgiving were keenly aware of their dependence on God's Providence. Their Protestant convictions should in no way lessen the enthusiasm of Catholics for entering wholeheartedly into their truly Christian sentiments. In fact, as Catholics we can make these sentiments more meaningful for we have the perfect method of giving thanks. We have the Holy Eucharist and the Eucharistic Sacrifice of the Mass; and Eucharist means gratitude or thankfulness. The Thanksgiving Day feast, therefore, should be preceded by participation in the Eucharistic Sacrifice and by partaking of the Eucharistic Feast.

VACATION ANNOUNCEMENTS .....

- 1) In the Diocese of Fort Wayne-South Bend there is a dispensation from abstinence on Friday, November 29. The dispensation has also been granted for the Archdiocese of New York. Those going elsewhere will have to find out the regulations in the diocese in which they take their vacation.
- 2) The 5:10 Mass on Tuesday, today, will be the last 5:10 Mass until Monday, December 2.
- 3) The 11:30 Mass in Sacred Heart Church will be said each day of the vacation. For those remaining on campus it will be a convenient Mass on Thanksgiving.
- 4) The Sunday Mass schedule in Sacred Heart Church will be the same as usual: 7:15, 8:30, 9:45, 11:00, and 12:15. There will be no Masses in Keenan-Stanford chapel next Sunday.
- 5) Confessions will not be heard on Saturday evening in Sacred Heart Church.

FOR THE NEEDY OVERSEAS don't forget to contribute some article of clothing -- usable, but unused by you -- to the Bishops' Clothing Collection. Before you leave on vacation "Give Thanks by Giving."

"HE WHO LOOSES HIS LIFE..." The Rumanian novelist, Virgil Gheorghiu, in The Twenty-Fifth Hour, writes, "Europe abandoned its slave traffic a hundred years ago...But today, we are retracing our steps. We are going backwards. We are again engaged in slave traffic. From the twentieth century we have suddenly reverted to a pre-Christian era."

"Our Western civilization," he says, "has disappeared. It had three qualities: it loved and respected beauty, a habit it took from the Greeks; it loved and respected law, a habit it took from the Romans; it loved and respected man, a habit it took on later and with much difficulty from the Christians. Only by a respect for these three symbols--man, beauty, and law--was our Western culture able to become what it has been. And now it has just lost the most precious portion of its heritage: love and respect for man."

Fr. John Francis Motte, in his book, The Catholic in the Modern World\*, draws our attention to this loss of respect for man in our modern philosophies. Atheistic existentialism, for instance, today, having denied God, leaves man without any possible justification. Marxism, likewise, teaches us that nothing matters except what the party demands, a party which has no respect for man today and will have none for him tomorrow.

Fr. Motte tells us that it is only in terms of a restoration of dignity to man that our society can be rebuilt today. And dignity, he says, can be restored to man only by man himself, through charity, through self-giving, through self-sacrifice. We make a fetish of seeking happiness today, he

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says, but the "only way to find happiness is not seek for it." Christ tried to orientate our minds in this direction when he said, "Seek first the Kingdom of God and his justice, and all these other things (such as happiness) will be given you besides."

Human beings are all madly seeking possessions today, but the only road of access to "true possession," says Fr. Motte, is through a dispossessing oneself of Self. "He who loses his life for my sake," says Christ, "will find it." A person finds himself by refusing to feed greedily on all that surrounds him in this material world. This is the mysterious reversal experienced by those who, having given all, find all is given back to them in God.

It is only in terms of the restoration of dignity to man that society can be rebuilt today. And man can restore dignity to himself only through charity, through personal involvement, through the gift of himself, of his time, of his heart, of his person.

"What time is it? My watch has stopped," says one of the characters in Gheorghiu's novel. His companion answers: "It's the twenty-fifth hour. The hour of Western civilization."