

***Third Sunday of Easter***  
***April 19, 2026***  
***Year of the Church in History***

*“And on the Lord’s own day gather yourselves together and break bread and give thanks, first confessing your transgressions, that your sacrifice may be pure.” (The Didache, date unknown)*

As I mentioned last Sunday, the second part of The Didache provided teachings concerning the rites of Baptism and Eucharist. Also included was practical advice concerning the treatment of Bishops, Deacons and Prophets. One particular point that I found rather interesting stated: *“Yet not every one that speaketh in the Spirit is a prophet, but only if he have the ways of the Lord. From his ways therefore the false prophet and the prophet shall be recognized”* (The Didache #11). You might wonder why I found this point of value; it was offered directly after a section concerning those who were known as false prophets because they sought financial assistance from the community. *“And when he departeth let the apostle receive nothing save bread, until he findeth shelter; but if he ask money, he is a false prophet”* (Didache #11). I will need to be careful from now on when I have to ask for your financial assistance.

Let us approach the last section of The Didache which dealt with the Second Coming. Once we begin to imagine whom the work was written for, then we can understand the importance placed upon the Sacraments of Baptism, Reconciliation and Eucharist.

*“And ye shall gather yourselves together frequently, seeking what is fitting for your souls; for the whole time of your faith shall not profit you, if ye be not perfected at the last season. For in the last days the false prophets and corrupters shall be multiplied, and the sheep shall be turned into wolves, and love shall be turned into hate”* (The Didache #16).

From the prophets and patriarchs of the Old Testament, to Jesus and His disciples in the New Testament, Sacred Scripture is filled with stories of suffering. We can read them in our time as stories involving a former generation. We can look at images sculpted or scenes painted and try our best to understand the situation of the times depicted. As much as we may try, we are left with only an image. This was not the case for Christians in those first two hundred years. Life and death were day to day occurrences for Christians. Depending upon the ruler or local governor, Christians could and did suffer persecution. We have already seen this as we reflected upon the martyrdoms of Saint Ignatius of Antioch and Saint Polycarp. Those “Last Days” we hear stories about, might have been the one a Christian lived, on any particular day. To fortify these early Christians toward any impending danger, importance was placed upon the Sacraments of Baptism, Eucharist and Reconciliation (Confession).

We may ask, concerning our times, do their words still apply for our generation? In a one-word answer: Yes! Since the moment God entered into human history, in the person of His Divine Son, we have been living in the “Last Days.” Christian teachers, such as bishops and priests, often took time to explain to their flocks concerning this subject. Our Catholic teachings, developed from these initial writings, sought to remind us of the tension we live each day we are alive. We are part of the world, yet our destiny, our goal is not in this world. We are always looking forward toward our eventual meeting with God. This meeting may come in a flash similar to lightning

across the night sky, or it may come slowly, as time grinds down our bodies through the years. The “when” should not be the focus of our thoughts. Rather, Christians were encouraged to “Be Prepared” as any Boy Scout was once told.

Those first Christian teachers would provide a means to assist in our preparation. This would be their emphasis upon the Sacraments of Baptism (for the washing away of all sin), Confession (for the forgiveness of any sins committed after Baptism) and Eucharist (for the strengthening encounter between God and man when received appropriately). These first great Sacraments would prepare the Christian of the past and the Christian of the present toward their final meeting with God. However, the author of The Didache also included a section concerning those who would administer the Sacraments. Bishops, Priests and Deacons were encouraged to be men formed in the image of Jesus. They were to give their lives in His service toward His flock. Not as hirelings, thus the reproach against those seeking financial gain, but to provide these life sustaining Sacraments both lovingly and freely. My family, this is still true as well. The flock of our day needs Bishops, Priests and Deacons to continue in His service providing these same life-giving Sacraments. We need young men to sacrifice themselves in this service for both God and their fellows. You, each of you, needs a young man to choose this life so these Sacraments can still be made available to you and those you love. We are just as vulnerable today as those first Christians were in their time. Our situations may be quite different, but only one thing has remained constant. We are all going to eventually come to our final meeting with God. Let us beg God for priests to assist us, teach us, encourage us and be with us especially as the end approaches. We pray there will always be a man who willingly accepts the yoke of Jesus, the mantle of sacrifice, for without a priest, we have no Sacraments and our preparation for our final meeting with Jesus is left unaided.