

Thirteenth Week of Ordinary Time (English)
Fifth Sunday after Pentecost (Latin)
June 28, 2026
Year of the Church in History

“Lex orandi, Lex credendi, Lex vivendi” (Ancient Latin Maxim)

As we proceed to read and reflect upon The First Apology of Saint Justin Martyr, I would like us to keep in our minds the ancient Latin maxim which translates into: ***Lex orandi*** (how we worship), ***Lex credendi*** (what we believe), ***Lex vivendi*** (how we live). In essence, the way we pray and worship shapes what we believe which in turn determines how we choose to conduct our lives. It is my intention, in the following reflections, to repeat this first paragraph so we may have a visible reminder each time we read. Likewise, I will present key statements from Saint Justin, using our Eucharistic Liturgy (Mass) as a benchmark.

“There is then brought to the president of the brethren bread and a cup of wine mixed with water; and he taking them, gives praise and glory to the Father of the universe, through the name of the Son and of the Holy Ghost, and offers thanks at considerable length for our being counted worthy to receive these things at His hands. . . Then we all rise together and pray, and, as we before said, when our prayer is ended, bread and wine and water are brought, and the president in like manner offers prayers and thanksgivings, according to this ability, and the people assent, saying Amen; . . .” (Saint Justin, First Apology)

As we pointed out last weekend, Christians in Rome worshipped in much the same way we do today. We began with the teaching of the Christian Faith which led to Baptism. Once the new Christian had experienced Baptism, they were allowed to participate in the common worship of the community held on the first day of the week which was Sunday. In the common worship, the new Christian would listen as a person read from the writings of the prophets (Old Testament) and the memoirs of the Apostles (Gospels). After the readings were proclaimed, the president of the community would take the time to explain what was being taught and how it applied to their lives currently. Afterward, a collection would be in order to assist with the needs of those who were not in a position to procure those goods needed for their survival. Now Saint Justin takes us to the next stage of early Christian worship with the bringing forth of certain gifts from the community, bread and wine which will be prayed over by the president of the community. In these few lines, Saint Justin takes us from the ambo (pulpit) to the altar for the second half of our Mass.

As the Liturgy would develop over time, we begin to see a connection to the Christians of Rome circa AD 150. This “procession” of the gifts of bread and wine is the second procession you have witnessed in this Mass. The first procession began in the beginning when the servers, readers, deacon and priests “processed” to the altar. The second comes at this moment when members of the congregation bring forth gifts asking for these gifts of the community to be blessed by God. Two things are worth remembering in this moment. It is “We” the members of the Family of God who are presenting these gifts. As mentioned earlier, through our Baptism, we become members of one Family. As Christians would later define in our Creed, we are members

of One, Holy, Catholic and Apostolic Church (Family). The second point worth mentioning concerned other gifts, not solely bread and wine, which were likewise brought forth from the community. These gifts could be offered to the president (priest) for his own livelihood. Also, much later in time, items could be brought forth to be blessed which concerned the celebration associated with that day. Food which will form the Saint Joseph Altar would be an example of this type of offering.

It will be later in time that a Theology of Sacrifice will be more fully explained in this Offertory procession. Christian communities would make sacrifices which allowed for the bread and wine to be brought forth. Some would sacrifice time to knead and bake the bread which would be used. Others would grow vineyards where the wine to be used could be procured. In areas which one or both of these were not possible, Christians would sacrifice in other ways to make sure these two great gifts, fundamental to the Liturgy, would be available.

As I have now come to the twenty-fifth year of my priestly ordination, this moment also reminds all present of the sacrifice of every priest who has ever donned a stole to celebrate the Eucharistic Liturgy. You may not be aware, but with each new priest ordained, the family of the priest must make a sacrifice. Their son is no longer their son solely. He has been presented to God by the family for the greater need of the Family. The first sacrifice begins with the family of the priest. The priest must also be willing to sacrifice for the people of God he has been called to shepherd. Despite the busyness of his schedule, his mind and heart must be found near the Tabernacle, close to the great High Priest. And like his Master, he must be willing to both bear the cross and die daily for the needs of the Family. Not once as at his ordination, but daily for our crosses are daily carried. Like Jesus before him, much of this sacrifice is done alone when no praise is given. As much as Mary, John and the holy women wanted to assist Jesus carrying the Cross, only He could carry it. They assisted Him with their presence and their prayers. The goal of the priest is not to become more angelic, rather it is to become more Christlike. If you, in this celebration, would offer me anything, pray that I may never forget this NEED to sacrifice everything for you.