**Liturgy Matters Lesson #17**

**Prayers of the Faithful**

**By Bishop Chad Zielinski**

I am Bishop Chad Zielinski serving the Diocese of New Ulm. Thank you for joining me and asking the Holy Spirit to guide us as we continue our lessons on "What Happens at Mass."

The last part of the Liturgy of the Word is what is called the prayer of the faithful or general intercessions. These are called prayers of the faithful because it is the responsibility of the baptized persons who live in the world to bring before God in prayer the needs of the Church and the whole world. It is precisely their life in the world, enlightened and shaped by what they have heard today in the Word of God, that equips these people with knowledge of what to pray for. The prayers are also called general intercessions, or sometimes even universal prayers, as an indication of the direction in which our prayer ought to go. These petitions should be very broad, all-embracing. Individuals can pray for their particular needs in the quiet of their hearts. Here the Church is giving voice to her relationship with the whole world. If particular communities do not manage to think in their prayers beyond their own border and interests, it is a limited sense of Church that is being expressed. In the community that reflects Christ's own expansive heart, we pray first of all for the Church, but for the Church precisely so that she can be holy and pleasing to God and a sacrament of salvation for the world. Second, we must pray for the world, above all that the world may know the salvation offered in Christ and, short of that, that sufferings and hardships be relieved and that injustices be redressed. Many other intentions are included, speaking mostly for other special intentions that involve the Church, but lastly, we pray for the faithful departed who are in need of our prayers just as much as we are in need of theirs.

The Liturgy of the Word culminates as the gifts are brought before the altar in preparation for the Liturgy of the Eucharist. We include all the prayers presently spoken and include them with the bread and wine as the Church brings both herself and the world forward to be placed in Christ's hands for transformation.

Thank you for joining me today in this lesson on the Prayers of the Faithful. The Mass is divided into two major parts: The Liturgy of the Word and the Liturgy of the Eucharist. Today we have completed all the lessons of the Liturgy of the Word.

I look forward to sharing Lesson #18 with you next week as we begin the section on the Liturgy of the Eucharist. Let us keep one another in prayer. May God bless you and your families.