**Liturgy Matters Lesson #7
 The Apostolic Greeting: “The Lord Be With You”**

**By Bishop Chad Zielinski**

Thank you for joining me as we continue our lessons on “What Happens at Mass.”

The next part of the Mass is the apostolic greeting. Here the priest greets the people with the phrase: “The Lord be with you.” The bishop may use the greeting we will hear in the Gospel of the second Sunday of Easter as the Risen Christ walks through the locked door where his disciples are gathered in fear. Breathing the Spirit on them, he extends, "Peace be with you.” In return, everyone greets the priest, saying," And with your Spirit." These are not meant to be exchanges of what might occur between any large group gathered and one who stands up in front with something to say to everyone and begins with a "Good morning" or "Good evening." This is an exchange uniquely belonging to the Christian community and peculiar to this moment in the community's life when it begins to celebrate the source and summit of its life. It is an exchange that immediately acknowledges the roles that will be played in this ritual action. The priest greets the people not as an individual but instead in his sacramental role of representing Christ at the head of his body, as Christ who will lead his body in prayer. This is called the apostolic greeting because the words come from greetings that the apostle Paul used in his letters. The apostles, for their part, passed this on to their successors, the bishops; and bishops share their apostolic ministry of leadership with priests. This greeting reminds us that the faith in which we stand comes to us from the apostles.

If the priest's greeting to the people is on such an exalted level, the people's response is no less highly pitched. They answer, "And with your Spirit." This response is not meant to say something to the effect of "the same to you." It means much more. The people are addressing the "Spirit" of the priest, that is, that deepest interior part of his being where he has been ordained precisely to lead the people in this sacred action. They are saying, in effect, "Be the priest for us now," aware that there is only one priest, Christ himself, and that this one person who represents him now must be finely tuned to perform his sacred duties as well. Only in the dignified courtesy of this exchange between the priest and people can we begin this liturgy, for the exchange expresses and establishes the unique harmony between ourselves, the priest, and the Church throughout the world.

May the Easter greeting of the Risen Christ fill you with renewed peace and continue to strengthen us as we grow closer to Him through our understanding and participation in the Holy Mass. Let us keep one another in prayer. May God bless you and your families.

Sincerely in Christ,

Bishop Chad Zielinski