

Wednesday of the 10th Week of Ordinary Time

Homily of Bishop John O. Barres

St. Agnes Cathedral

June 10, 2020

In the Apostolic Exhortation *Sacramentum Caritatis*, Pope Benedict XVI prayerfully analyzes the presence of the Holy Spirit in the Eucharistic Prayers of the Catholic Mass. He draws specifically on the great figure of Elijah and the passage we just heard from the 18th Chapter of the first Book of Kings.

Pope Benedict writes: “Thus it is through the working of the Spirit that Christ himself continues to be present and active in his Church, starting with her vital center which is the Eucharist. Against this backdrop we can understand the decisive role played by the Holy Spirit in the Eucharistic celebration, particularly with regard to transubstantiation...Saint Cyril of Jerusalem, in his *Catecheses*, states that we ‘call upon God in his mercy to send his Holy Spirit upon the offerings before us, to transform the bread into the body of Christ and the wine into the blood of Christ. Whatever the Holy Spirit touches is sanctified and completely transformed.’ Saint John Chrysostom too notes that the priest invokes the Holy Spirit when he celebrates the sacrifice: like Elijah, the minister calls down the Holy Spirit so that ‘as grace comes down upon the victim, the souls of all are thereby inflamed.’”(12-13)

To trace that short reference to Elijah by St. John Chrysostom to its full context in the first Book of Kings that we just heard illumines how a Catholic bishop or priest on fire ontologically, on fire with *holiness and mission*, on fire with unity of life and pastoral charity, on fire with the New Evangelization calls down, like Elijah, the Fire of the Holy Spirit on the gifts of bread and wine, on the Body of Christ and upon the entire World. May the Holy Spirit breathe the Gift of Peace and Gift of Justice on each one of us.

St. Ephrem, whose feast day we celebrated yesterday, states: “He called the bread his living body and he filled it with himself and his Spirit...He who eats it with faith, eats Fire and Spirit. Take and eat this, all of you, and eat with it

the Holy Spirit. For it is truly my body and whoever eats it will have eternal life.” (*Ecclesia de Eucharistia* 17)