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Evening Prayer I – 4th Sunday of Easter
St. Elizabeth Ann Seton Church
May 2, 2009

“A mom has to stop whatever she’s doing when it comes time for a meal, so that she can feed her family. There are other good things that I want to get done in a day, but when it comes to meal time, I must stop because the family needs to eat.”

This insight on the time management priorities of a mother came from my own mom last August. She probably had no idea what a profound impact those words would have on me. As is not uncommon for seminarians, at the time I was still struggling with the self-discipline to say the set of five prayers throughout the course of the day that comprise the liturgy of the hours for diocesan clergy. Getting into that routine is important, however, since today I made a lifetime commitment to pray daily the liturgy of the hours under the pain of mortal sin. The prayer liturgy we are doing together right now, this Evening Prayer, is the first time I am fulfilling my commitment.

What mom’s comment helped me to see is that just as a natural mother must feed her family with meals, a spiritual father, as I am becoming, must feed his family with spiritual food, with prayer. Just as mom must set aside her otherwise important tasks for a most important, but unglamorous task of cooking, I must do the same with my fulfillment of praying the Hours.

Many people think that the Liturgy of the Hours is only to be prayed by priests and religious. The Vatican II documents make it explicitly clear that is a misunderstanding. Pastors of souls are encouraged to pray Sunday vespers publicly in church, just as we are doing right now. And members of the laity are encouraged to recite the Liturgy of the Hours on their own. To return to the cooking analogy, just as myself and other family members can help mom with her cooking of food, you all can help me in my role of spiritually feeding the people of God by praying the Liturgy of the Hours occasionally.

But I think there is an even more important lesson embedded in mom’s wisdom for all of us to consider. Each of us has a vocation given to us by God. We were each made for a special purpose that no one else can fulfill, a special way of loving and serving God and others. And each such vocation requires a certain fidelity and discipline in performing non-glorious tasks if our life is to bear fruit ... When we are faithful in these seemingly small tasks we act in keeping with the wonderful heritage given by God to us, His people, described in the scripture reading that John just proclaimed: “you are a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a people he claims for his own to proclaim the glorious works of the one who called you from darkness into his marvelous light.”

For most of the moms here, an important, non-glamorous, vocation fulfilling task is to make sure the family is fed three times a day. For all the ordained here, it is praying the liturgy of the hours. What is it that God is asking of you to live a fruitful life in the vocation He has made you to fulfill? How are you to bring the light of Christ into the lives of others, by feeding them loving them, and encouraging them?