Homily, delivered by Fr. Michael Drury

August 16, 2015, 20th Sunday in Ordinary Time

St. Anthony Catholic Church, Missoula

“The Weight of a Mass”

Albert Einstein died 60 years ago. He was a man known for his tremendous intelligence. He formulated theories such as the theory of relativity. This brilliant Jewish man was very interested in the belief that Christ is really present in the Eucharist.

I know of Albert Einstein’s interest in the Eucharist through a retreat I attended some years ago. The retreat was given by Fr. Benedict Groeschel in Long Branch, New Jersey. He asked an elderly priest who was also attending the retreat to share his memory of meeting Albert Einstein. The priest, a Port Chaplain in New Jersey, asked for a meeting with Einstein, whom he wanted to meet. Unfortunately, the priest was late for the appointment. Still, Dr. Einstein saw him for the few remaining minutes he had available. The priest went on to tell us that Albert Einstein asked him for some theology books which spoke about Transubstantiation, which addresses the changing of the bread and wine into the Body and Blood of Christ. Fr. Groeschel, also from New Jersey, asked in typical New Jersey style, “And... did you give him the books?” Fortunately the answer was “yes”.

It is foolish to reject the works of God because they don’t fit into our limited view of the universe. It is wise to know, as did Einstein, that there is always more to know than what we can imagine, and to be open to God working in the world. This applies especially to the teaching on the Eucharist.

Jesus strained to have his fellow Jews accept his teaching on the Eucharist. He repeated himself in teaching about the Eucharist. In the Gospel passage proclaimed today, Jesus spoke of his flesh to eat five times, and four times He spoke of his blood to drink. He made clear what many of his contemporaries
would not accept. Still, for those who do accept, the Eucharist is the center of our lives and rends open a closed view of the universe.

The greatness of the Eucharist is artistically portrayed in the book “The Weight of a Mass” by Josephine Nobisso (Gingerbread House, Westhampton Beach, New York). The book tells the story of a village where faith in God was greatly neglected. A poor widow asked the baker for a crust of bread and he rudely asked what she had to give in return. She said, “I will offer my Mass for you.” He scoffed and then went to his scales. On a small piece of tissue paper, he wrote “One Mass”, put the paper on the scales and proceeded to put one of his pastries on the other side of the scales. The scales did not move. The piece of tissue paper, or rather what it represented, outweighed the pastry. Furiously, more cakes and pastries were added to the scales. The baker was befuddled. He couldn’t understand. The people of the town, by now aware of what had happened in the bakery, did understand. They saw the miracle.

In real life, the story is told by Fr. Stanislaus, SS.C. The disbeliever was a butcher in Luxembourg and the Captain of the Forest Guard was a witness to what happened. A widow asked for some meat and met with the scoffing of the butcher. It seems the rest of the story is similar. The weight of a Mass outweighed whatever was placed on the other end of the scale. The Captain returned to Mass and his son who became a priest was none other than Fr. Stanislaus.

If we but realize the weight of a Mass.