

Advent~Christmas 2009



St. Patrick Catholic Community

Our GOD is Here

Due to the way ritual works, the connection between the Liturgy of the Word and the Liturgy of the Eucharist is important. In the ritual of the Mass, we enter into the story of Jesus' life, death, and resurrection. By ritualizing the story, we become part of it and Jesus becomes part of us. Our ritual response to the Word of God proclaimed is to stand and gather around the table. At the table, ritually, we take, bless, break, and share the Bread of Life. Likewise, we take, bless, pour, and share the cup of salvation. These are ritual actions that remind us of the actions in Jesus' life and make those present. Jesus was often sharing meals. But more significantly, he shared himself, being broken in the bread and poured out in the cup.

## The Liturgy of the Eucharist

+ The collection begins the Liturgy of the Eucharist and our Catholic Community of St. Patrick frames the discussion about how much one should financially give in terms of stewardship. What we have been given is ours in the sense that we recognize everything we have comes from God and is God's. Part of stewardship is obviously money, but part of what has been given to us by God calls us to share our time, talent, and treasure with our Catholic Community so the work of the Gospel and evangelization can take place.

+ During the Preparation of the Gifts and Altar or sometimes referred as the Offertory, the gifts of bread and wine are brought forward. The rationale behind this act is that these foods are the result of human planting, harvesting, and productivity. These are central to our act of self-giving. Even though the food is not of our doing, as in earlier times, the gesture serves as a sign of our dedication and willingness to give of our talents for the sake of others. The deacon is the minister who prepares the altar, if the deacon is not present then the presider does it.

+ After the altar is prepared and the presider has washed his hands, he states *Pray my brothers and sisters, that our sacrifice may be acceptable to God, the almighty Father.* The members of the assembly stand and respond, *May the Lord accept the sacrifice at your hands for the praise and glory of his name, for our good, and the good of all his Church.* The assembly stands to symbolically state that they humbly offer themselves to God.

+ There are three parts to the introduction to the preface and the Eucharistic prayer. Its origins are from the Jewish custom whereby an introduction such as "the Lord be with you" would signal that an important proclamation was to follow. As early as the third century, liturgical rites found in the *Apostolic Tradition* of Hippolytus of Rome contain the same three phrases we use today at the introduction to the Eucharistic Prayer.

+ The first, *The Lord be with you* specifics what is already occurring in the Mass—that God is indeed with us. *Lift up your hearts* invites us to be especially attentive to what is to follow, not just with our minds and intellectual faculties, but with our whole and entire self. The last part, *Let us give thanks to the Lord our God*, specifics exactly what is to follow: our offer of praise and thanks to God for creation and redemption. Our response, *It is right to give him thanks and praise* signifies our willingness to what is within our competence and what we should feel responsible to do.

+ The preface, which is part of the Eucharistic prayer, introduces the main body of the Eucharistic prayer. With the liturgical reforms of Vatican II there are now over 90 prefaces in the Roman Missal or

Sacramentary. These prefaces vary in terms of a liturgical feast or season, such as Advent, Christmas, Lent, Easter or Ordinary Time. Each preface praises Jesus and describes the different facets of Christ's redemption.

+ The "Holy Holy Holy" acclamation or Sanctus, which follows the preface, should ideally be sung. The first part comes from Isaiah 6:2-3 which praises God for the gift of creation and the second part of the acclamation *Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord* which comes from Matthew 21:9, praises God for redemption.

+ The Catholic Church currently has nine Eucharistic Prayers, which can be found in the Roman Missal or Sacramentary. The Eucharistic Prayer is styled after the Jewish table-blessing prayer, which is a story of all that God has done for his people with special emphasis on the unique saving death and resurrection of Jesus. The presider is the one who tells the story and calls the members of the assembly into the story. The presider prays the Eucharistic Prayer with the belief that through this prayer the elements of bread and wine are transformed and become the Body and Blood of Christ following the words of consecration. This term is called transubstantiation.

+ The acclamation that follows the words of institution, "This is my body/blood," is new to the Mass since Vatican II. The rationale for this is if the Mass is essentially the actualization of Christ's paschal mystery (his life, death, and resurrection) as the mystery of faith, therefore it would make sense to emphasize this part of the Eucharistic prayer with an acclamation. We have four choices all of which specify Christ's death and resurrection. For example, *Christ has died, Christ has risen, Christ will come again*.

+The final doxology at the end of the Eucharistic Prayer *...through him, with him, in him...* concludes with the people's assent, the affirmation of "Amen" meaning "so be it" or "I believe."

+ In the Lord's Prayer we are addressing God as Father in the words Jesus gave us. The structure of the prayer is typical of Jewish prayers: naming, addressing, and praising God (hallowed by thy name), asking for seven petitions (the number was customary at special Jewish feasts) and ending with a final doxology (*for the kingdom, the power and glory are yours*).

+The Sign of Peace is a ritual gesture signifying unity, reconciliation, and a deepening of share in Christ's peace.

+ The Fraction Rite is the ritual of breaking the bread and pouring the wine for communion. The bread, the Body of Christ, is broken—just as the Body of Christ was broken on the cross. The wine, the Blood of Christ, is poured out—just as the blood of Christ was poured out on the cross. In the breaking the assembly sees the life and death of Jesus. In the pouring we are reminded of all the life and death we have experienced and all the life and death that all Christians throughout history has experienced.

+ We come forward, as a pilgrim people, to receive the Body and Blood of Christ. As the person in front of us is receiving the Eucharist we bow as a sign of respect for what we are going to receive.

+ The announcements take place following the Prayer after Communion. This is the final act of community business before we are dismissed.

+ The Dismissal Rite sends each member of the community forth to do good works, praising and blessing the Lord. Vatican II informs us the Eucharistic response of the assembly does not stop when Mass is over. The ultimate and most important Eucharistic response is what we do after we get home. This is called mission and evangelization. As the assembly we are sent out as the Lord's disciples to proclaim the Good News of Jesus' love for all.

+ As we *go in peace to love and serve the Lord* we are sent forth to assist and support one another as we work to shatter the darkness of sin in our world with the light of Christ that we have just received at Mass in the Word proclaimed, the Eucharist received, and in our fellow Catholics.