

Advent~Christmas 2009



St. Patrick Catholic Community

Our GOD is Here

The Roman Catholic Mass is divided into two parts: the Liturgy of the Word and the Liturgy of the Eucharist. The Liturgy of the Word has its roots in the Jewish word service, while the Liturgy of the Eucharist can trace its beginnings to the Last Supper. Within the Liturgy of the Word there are two parts: Gather and Proclaim. The Liturgy of the Eucharist also has two sections: Break and Send.

The Liturgy of the Word

+ The Gather segment is made up of welcoming the assembly, the Gathering Song, the Procession, the Sign of the Cross, the Penitential Rite, the Gloria, and the Opening Prayer or Collect. Gathering is an important action by which a roomful of individuals is transformed into an assembly. The purpose of the gathering rite is to help the assembled people become a worshipping community by being ready to listen attentively to the Word of God, to receive Jesus in the Eucharist, and to be Christ to one another.

+ We welcome one another before mass in a spirit of Christian hospitality following the command of Jesus to love one another. For us to love one another we are invited by the community to know one another.

+ The procession of the altar servers, the minister of the word, who carries the Book of Gospels, the deacon(s) and priest serves a reminder that we are a pilgrim people on a journey to know and love Jesus. The gathering song is meant to unite the assembly as one and set the tone and theme for the liturgy.

+ The sign of the cross marks us Catholics, reminds us of Jesus' great love for us and indicates we are saved by the cross.

+ The reforms of the Second Vatican Council expanded the Penitential Rite and made it part of the assembly's prayer. The Kyrie, an ancient part of the Liturgy, was not and is not intended to be penitential in nature. It is, instead, supposed to be a proclamation of praise and mercy or love God has shown us in Christ.

+ It is believed the Gloria came into the Liturgy during approximately the sixth century. But it was used only on festive occasions and only when the bishops presided. It was not until after the eleventh century that the Gloria came to be used at ordinary parish liturgies.

+ The Gloria is a song of praise based on the hymn of angels in Luke 2:14, which resembles the Psalms in structure and style. The Gloria is meant to be sung, not recited, and it is intended to be a song of the assembly. The current practice of singing the Gloria on Sundays and feast days outside of Advent and Lent have become universal in the western church.

+ The climax of the Gathering Rite is the Opening Prayer or the older name for the Opening Prayer is the Collect. It was given this name because with this prayer the presider "collects" all the prayers and praise that has gone before and presents it to God as we ready ourselves to hear the Word of God.

+ The second part of the Liturgy of the Word is Proclaim. The task of the Catholic Church in our time is to give God's living Word back to the people. Vatican II insists that the Word of God is the first source of life. The purpose of proclaiming the Word of God in the midst of the assembly gathered for liturgy is to help the assembly experience the life-giving presence of Jesus in his word. Lectors are encouraged not just to read the Word of God but to proclaim it.

+ The first reading is from the Old Testament, which comes to the Liturgy from the Jewish synagogue service. The first reading is usually connected to the Gospel reading by a similar theme.

+ The psalm or Responsorial Psalm also continues the practice of the Jewish synagogue. Christians have traditionally responded to a Scripture reading by singing a psalm. Today the community gathered for Liturgy responds to the Word of God (the first reading) with the Word of God (responsorial psalm). The psalms were written to be sung, the responsorial psalm should never be spoken at Mass.

+ The second reading is always a New Testament reading, usually from Paul or another epistle. The choice of Scripture is made independently of the first reading and Gospel reading. In the second reading the assembly encounters the early church living the Christian faith. It provides the assembly an example of how to live and follow Jesus.

+ The purpose of the Gospel Acclamation is to set up, or to introduce, the proclamation of the gospel that follows it. It introduces what we believe to be the "good news" of the words and deeds of Christ. In all the seasons of the church year except for Lent (which does not use the Alleluia) this part of the Liturgy is commonly called the Alleluia.

+ Since the earliest times the Gospel reading has been emphasized by special signs of respect: the priest or deacon proclaims it and the assembly stands to hear the readings. Standing is also seen as alertness in the presence of the risen Lord. The Gospel reading is the highpoint in the Liturgy of the Word; it proclaims the Good News of Salvation by the risen Christ.

+ After the Gospel proclamation, the homily takes place. The homily is meant to apply the scripture readings to the lives of the assembly, calling them to conversion and faithfulness to Jesus.

+ The word "Creed" comes from the Latin word *credo* which means "I believe." In the fourth century there was a church council in Nicea and another in Constantinople. The Council of Nicea defined some important aspects of our faith, and these faith statements were later fashioned into a creed at another council in Constantinople. This creed which is called the Nicene Creed is usually said at mass. The Creed was not at first intended for use in the Mass. It was only after a heresy in the fifth century that the Creed was added to the Liturgy as a way to stop heretics from receiving Communion. Rome maintained the practice of not reciting the Creed until 1014 when King Henry II visited Rome and was shocked to learn the Creed was not part of the Liturgy. He convinced Pope Benedict VIII to add the Creed to the Liturgy.

+ The General Intercessions conclude the first part of the Mass, the Liturgy of the Word. During this part of the Liturgy the statement of petitions and the assembly's response as well as the presider's opening and concluding prayer are included in the General Intercessions. It is recommended that the prayers of the General Intercessions include the needs to the church, the nation or the world, those suffering for any particular reason, the sick and, finally the deceased.

Next Weekend: The Liturgy of the Eucharist