



GOOD LITURGY BUILDS FAITH

Poor Liturgy Destroys It

The Role of the Assembly in Liturgy

- + The word liturgy comes from the Greek, which means the people's work. It is a public work done for the service of others. In ancient Greek it originally meant the cooperation of all citizens to make society work. The Catholic Church defines liturgy as the public worship for the service of others. Liturgy is public prayer and ritual, it is communal in nature. There is nothing private about the mass.
- + The Catholic Church has divided the liturgy into two parts: The Liturgy of the Word, which has its roots in the Jewish word service, and the Liturgy of the Eucharist, which can be traced to the Last Supper. Within the Liturgy of the Word there are two sections: Gather and Proclaim; the Liturgy of the Eucharist is divided into Break and Send.
- + The intent of the gathering rite is to help people become a worshipping community by being ready to hear the Word of God, receive Jesus in the Eucharist, be Christ to one another, and give glory to God. Church does not just happen; it is the role of the members of the assembly gathered for liturgy to make it happen.
- + The Catholic Church proclaims the Word of God during the liturgy in order to assist the faithful in experiencing the life-giving presence of Jesus in his word. Proclamation in the midst of the assembly is the first purpose of all scripture. The experience of Jesus in the word takes place only to the extent that members of the assembly take on the role of the listener.
- + The Eucharistic Prayer, which is the prayer of the Church, is the story of all that God has done for His people with an emphasis on Christ's death and resurrection. The presider tells the story and invites the assembly into the story. The Church prays the Eucharistic Prayer over the bread and wine with the belief that through this prayer the elements of bread and wine become the Body and Blood of Jesus. Following the presider's words of consecration Jesus is fully present in the bread and wine.
- + As Christians, we are called to be Christ to others. We are called to be of service, and this attitude is required of us at liturgy. This responsibility to be of service to others comes from our baptism and it is at the heart of being Catholic.
- + Many times you will hear people say "I don't get anything out of Mass." If one were to search the scriptures and the sacred tradition of the Catholic Church this attitude is never taught by Jesus or by the church. It is in giving the Christ that is found within us at liturgy to others, that we receive.

+ The purpose of the holy sacrifice of the Mass is to give glory to God, hear the Word of God, receive the Body and Blood of Christ, and to serve the community, by bringing others gathered for liturgy closer to Jesus. We come to Mass to be of service. As Catholics we do not come to liturgy for ourselves, but for others, so others can experience Jesus through the Word, the Eucharist, and us. Like Jesus, it is in our dying to self that others experience new life.

+ In the document *Art and Environment in Catholic Worship* it states, "among the symbols with which liturgy deals with, none is more important than the assembly of believers. The entire congregation is an active component. There is no audience, no passive element. The most powerful experience of the sacred is found in the celebration and the person celebrating (28-29). *The Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy* desires that all the faithful should be led to full, active, and conscious participation in liturgical celebrations (14), and yet if one were to observe the assembly during liturgy there are still many Catholics who are not singing or participating in the liturgy.

+ Full participation means that a person does not mentally weave in and out of the liturgy. Our duty is not just to be physically present; our duty is to be fully present. The songs are meant for singing (*Gather Faithfully Together*, 91, 92). *The General Instruction of the Roman Missal (GIRM)* states that great importance should be attached to the use of singing at Mass (19). *The Constitution on Sacred Liturgy* says "liturgical music takes on a more dignified character when the rites are celebrated solemnly in song, with sacred ministers taking part and with the active participation of the people" (113).

+ The dismissal or sending rite sends each member of the community to go forth to do good works while giving praise and thanksgiving to God. The goal at the end of the liturgy is not to get out of the church or parking lot as soon as possible. We are commissioned and blessed to bring the gospel message of Jesus to a waiting world.

+ In order to continue building on good liturgy at St. Patrick, we are asking you as a member of this parish to:

1. arrive on time for Mass,
2. allot yourself a minimum of one hour and 30 minutes for liturgy,
3. turn off or silence your cell phone, please no gum chewing,
4. create an environment of hospitality by welcoming others to liturgy,
5. actively participate in the prayers at liturgy,
6. sing all the songs during Mass,
7. stay for the entire liturgy, and
8. make a commitment to attend Sunday Mass on a weekly basis.

+ The goal of liturgy is the transformation of people's lives to Jesus. It is about the conversion of hearts. For if during liturgy we sit as a disenfranchised audience watching a few people doing what we are called to do, how are we ever going to change the world and shatter the darkness of sin with the light of Christ.

+ Our challenge as Catholics is to go from liturgy strengthened by the Word of God, nurtured by the Eucharist, and encouraged by the assembly, to spread the light of Christ and allow others to taste and see the goodness of the Lord.

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