

“DO THIS IN MEMORY OF ME”

A Class on the Mass

Part 7 Ministry of the Community

Our Mass is not (to use a familiar term) a “Spectator Sport”. We do not come to church to simply watch the priest celebrate the Mass. We are **all** called to **celebrate** what the Lord has done for us, to thank Him for his goodness and love, and to actively participate in our worship which we owe to Him. In the General Instruction to the Roman Missal the bishops instruct us:

In the celebration of Mass the faithful form a holy people, a people whom God has made his own, a royal priesthood, so that they may give thanks to God and offer the spotless Victim not only through the hands of the priest but also together with him, and so that they may learn to offer themselves. They should, moreover, endeavor to make clear by their deep religious sense and their charity toward their brothers and sisters who participate with them in the same celebration.

Thus, they are to shun any appearance of individualism or division, keeping before their eyes that they have only one Father in heaven and accordingly are all brothers and sisters to each other. (GIRM, #95)

Indeed, they form one body, whether by hearing the word of God, or by joining in the prayers and the singing, or above all by the common offering of Sacrifice and by a common partaking at the Lord’s table. This unity is beautifully apparent from the gestures and postures observed in common by the faithful. (GIRM, #96)

The faithful, moreover, should not refuse to serve the People of God gladly whenever they are asked to perform some particular ministry or function in the celebration. (GIRM,#97)

This calls for a ministry, a service we owe to the Lord and to one another. This ministry involves the activities of Hospitality, Participation, and Stewardship. Our ushers, musicians, and other ministers are entrusted with these ministries in a formal sense but we all are called to be involved in sharing this service.

Hospitality

Hospitality begins with the our **Ushers** who are men and women who help people feel welcome and comfortable as they gather for the Eucharistic celebration. Their duties are to greet parishioners as they enter for worship, to assist them in seating, especially those who need assistance, to take up the collection, to select people to bring up the gifts at the Offertory, and to handle emergency situations if they arise, and to wish everyone a good day at the conclusion of Mass. Although they are assigned to perform this ministry, **all of us** are called to make people feel welcome with a friendly smile, a warm greeting, a handshake of welcome. Our congregation is not a crowd, a group of lonely strangers, but a community reaching out to one another with care, concern, and love for one another. This involves being present to those around us, taking the time to notice them, helping them if they need assistance, and especially making a stranger feel like a welcomed guest.

Participation

Our Mass is made up of prayers and actions which we use to express our faith and calls for our responsive participation. This participation involves paying attention first to those around us and then to the prayers and readings. Our liturgy is not a place for private prayer per se or self-centered presence. We must make an concerted effort to really be present to what is happening and listen attentively to what is being said, all of which becomes our prayer. Listening attentively to the readings proclaimed by the Lector, the proclaiming of the Gospel and the

homily preached by the priest/deacon involves an effort in a world where we are not used to the spoken word alone. This is especially true as the priest prays the Eucharistic Prayer where we are to realize that he is praying for all of us as well.

Our role also involves responding enthusiastically and spiritedly to those places where we are asked to make a response. We are to take the attitude that we are to pray as though every prayer depended upon our words! We cannot get anything out of Mass until we put something into it. Giving is receiving.

An area where many Catholic congregations need to improve is singing. This includes our community as well. It is interesting that we can sing at parties and baseball games but refuse to sing in church! We listen to the singing but do not help with the singing. The musicians, cantors, and choir are there not to entertain us but to assist and lead us, in essence, supplement our singing. It is difficult to sing when no one around us is singing but if everyone raised their voices in song our liturgy would take on a whole new spirit. We may argue that God did not bless us with a good voice, but as it was once said, maybe we need to remind him of that!

Stewardship

Our parish website has a great definition of stewardship:

Stewardship - A Way of Gospel Living

Each of us entered this world totally dependent upon the goodness of God and the service of others for life, comfort, and satisfaction of their basic needs and wants, particularly in the very beginning of their existence. Throughout a lifetime, each of us develops abilities with God's grace, to sustain, utilize, increase, our spiritual and material gifts with a will that is free to determine how, when, and why. Each of us is indebted to God.

Take a moment to review the principles of Stewardship. It is not a drive or a fund raising project. It is a process to help you evaluate your life situation (in areas of Time, Talent, Treasure) and then make a commitment based on what is possible for you and your family.

What is Stewardship?

Stewardship is based on the teachings of the bible as taught in both the Old and the New Testament. It is especially based upon the need of the giver to give and share, rather than condescending to meet another person's need. Stewardship becomes a way of life. True stewardship involves intentional, planned and proportionate giving of time, talent, and treasure. Intentional means a deliberate and well thought out decision to live out the Christian life in a certain way. It implies a commitment that will be given priority as time goes on. Planned means that, at the beginning of every year, each Catholic household plans and makes Stewardship of time and talent a part of their lifestyle and stewardship of treasure a part of their own budget. Proportionate means a decision is made to give a certain percentage of one's time and talent and one's income to the church and other community charities.

This is quite self-explanatory. We are called to support our parish community with our time, our energy, and our resources. This flows out of our Eucharistic celebration in which we are called to make present Jesus present not only in our parish but in the world as well.

Reflection Questions:

1. Are we more than just a spectator in our celebration of the Mass?
2. Do we listen attentively and respond enthusiastically during the celebration?
3. Do we sing?
4. Are we good stewards? Giving our time, energy and finances generously to our parish?

