

LITURGY BYTES

The Mass – Part 3

So this week we will focus on the “storytelling” part of the Mass, technically referred to as the Liturgy of the Word. On a practical level, all of us when gathering for a meal at a friend’s home begin with conversation, telling what has been happening in our lives or even recalling something from the past. At Mass, after the gathering piece, we sit down and listen as readings from Scripture are proclaimed. These are stories of God’s people.

The stories all come from Sacred Scripture. Usually, the first reading is from the Hebrew Scriptures (except during the Easter season). There is a connection between this reading and the Gospel: it gives background and insight into the meaning of what Jesus will do in the Gospel. Next, we sing or recite a psalm which comes from the Book of Psalms in the Old Testament (Hebrew Scriptures). We then have a second reading from the New Testament (Christian Scriptures). It is usually one of St. Paul’s letters or another apostolic writing. The Gospel is the third reading, naturally coming from one of the four gospels we find in the New Testament. We stand for this reading because of the unique presence of Christ in the proclamation of the Gospel as we believe that Christ is present in his word.

Catholics are not famous for our Bible reading, and yet the Mass has always been basically and fundamentally biblical. Even some Catholics might be surprised to learn how much of the Mass is taken from the Bible: not only the three readings and the psalm, not only the obviously biblical prayers such as the Holy, Holy, Holy and the Lord’s Prayer, but most of the words and phrases of the prayers of the Mass.

Following the readings, the homily takes place not as a sermon or talk. The homily takes the word and brings it to our life situation today. We then stand and recite the Creed, which is a summary of our beliefs. The Liturgy of the Word comes to a conclusion with the Universal Prayer (formerly known as the Prayer of the Faithful). We pray for the Church, world nations and their leaders, people in need and our local needs. Next on tap we will focus on the Liturgy of the Eucharist – our meal sharing.

Have a blessed, safe and healthy week ahead!~~~~*Michele Hall*