

LITURGY BYTES

A Different View – part 2



Picking up from last week's part 1, we return to our response of paying attention to the liturgy. Our first response is we need to be reflective about what we are doing at the Mass. We also need to pay attention to the prayer – the words, the movements, the objects, even the space and time.

Firstly, let us look at what we bring to the liturgical prayer of the Mass as it unfolds. In other words, our dying and rising in our everyday lives should be joined to the death and rising of Jesus. We need to be mindful of the griefs and the joys of our daily lives, the longings, the half-met expectations etc.—all human experiences that influence what we bring to Mass each week. The liturgy is a celebration of our experience, helping us to make sense of it, to purify it, to face the truth of it, to live through it and to surrender to God. Liturgy demands of us attention to itself and attention to ourselves. With so many distractions in our world today, this makes it most difficult. We have gadgets that distract us, much noise coming from many sources. On the other hand, there are those who do not have a cluttered life. They barely have enough to get by and struggle to make ends meet. Even though we have a longing for these obstacles that distract us, there is a longing for other kinds of values, like something more than mere survival, for example, beauty, solitude, simplicity to name a few. Today, we have a reverence for the earth, the fragility of our planet and all creation. There are so many things to distract us from paying attention, and yet there seems to be a restlessness until we rest with God. The desire for God is at the beginning and end of paying attention. This is called contemplation. Contemplation is the art of paying attention to God and to oneself in God. I am sure by now you are wondering what all of this has to do with our experience of the Mass. In liturgy, we gradually cultivate an awareness of God at the very heart of the touches, sights, sounds and smells of the Word, gestures, and objects, even of the faces of those with whom we have gathered at Mass.

I am not trying to be complicated by offering all that influences how we pay attention when we are at Mass. Truly it is impossible to recall all of the above as we come each week for Mass. Perhaps a good place to start would be to try to think of one point each week. It could help in realizing, once again, the beauty of each part of the Mass and how we, the people, are truly part of it. And, depending on “where” we are at on that day, what effect of God's love will we experience?

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