

WORSHIP



In Preparation for the Teaching Masses On October 16-17th The Sacrifice of the Mass – Part 3



“The Liturgy of the Word”

God’s Word is “living and effective” (Hebrews 4:12)

“achieving the end for which (he) sent it” (Isaiah 55:11).

God’s people are called to receive and embrace the Word, allowing it to transform their lives.

This section of the Mass which includes the Scripture readings, homily, creed and intercessions of the faithful, is beautifully woven with a rhythm all its own. As we are seated for the first reading from the Old Testament, we are poised to hear the stories of the Jewish people throughout history prior to the coming of Christ. These are the roots of our Christianity – the story of God’s covenant with his people. Sometimes the stories are dramatic, and sometimes they are simple tales of simple people. But God is revealing himself to us through these Old Testament figures, assuring us of his faithfulness. Afterwards, a silent pause is shared by the assembly as the cantor prepares to lead the Responsorial Psalm. Our sung response frames the familiar psalm, and the words draw us into a spirit of penitence, mercy, gratitude, or joy. A silent pause readies us to listen once again.

The second reading is usually a letter of St. Paul or another apostle to the people of the early church, after the Resurrection of Our Lord. Its message transcends time, and through the gentle whisper of the Holy Spirit, speaks directly to our hearts. Afterward we experience that pause where stillness exists, before we hear Christ’s words directed to us in the Gospel reading.

What does full, active, and conscious participation look like?

We listen attentively with eyes on the lector as we would any story-teller. The words are available in a missalette or hymnal for those who have difficulty hearing, but the assembly is asked not to read along but to listen with fresh ears and open hearts. God is speaking to us in our time and in our present situation. In the Gospel, Christ himself is teaching us this very day through the figure of the presiding priest. We probably should be paying close attention! The ritual that surrounds the Gospel reading is one of honor and striking importance. The presider lifts the Book of Gospels, processes to the ambo accompanied by two candle-bearers, and we sing an acclamation, followed by making the sign of the cross on our foreheads, lips and hearts.

This signifies our mind’s acceptance, our promise to keep the Gospel in our daily lives, and our desire to take the Word into our heart.

What if we do not understand the text that is being proclaimed?

God speaks to each of us in a way that we can understand. It is up to us to consciously put aside distractions and allow ourselves to be drawn into the text. Perhaps it is a single word or phrase that will resonate in our minds throughout the week ahead, and begin the change within us. It is Psalm 119:105 which reminds us: “A lamp to my feet is your word, a light to my path.” The homily also nourishes our understanding of the readings, bringing what may be obscure into focus.

Following a period of silent reflection, we stand in full stature before God and the gathered community to profess our faith in all that we believe, and to bring our concerns before God in the Prayers of the Faithful.

***We are then seated to await the preparation of the altar table for the Paschal Feast,
celebrating Christ’s ultimate gift to us – the Eucharist.***