

## THE LITURGY OF THE WORD

**INTRODUCTION:** In the Readings, God speaks to His people with great love, opening up to them the mystery of redemption and salvation, and nourishing their spirit. Christ is Present in His Word when it is proclaimed at Mass. By their silent listening and pondering, by their singing and acclamations, the people make God's Word their own and affirm their acceptance of it in the Creed. The Biblical Readings and their accompanying Scripture chants may not be omitted, or replaced by non-biblical texts.

**'PAUSE FOR THOUGHT':** After the Reader says: 'The Word of the Lord', there is a short pause before the Psalm is said or sung. There are several places in the Mass where silent reflection is called for. The Liturgy will be all the poorer if we ignore them. It may sometimes be helpful for the Readings to be introduced by a brief word from the Celebrant in order to facilitate listening.

**THE PSALM:** The Psalm is an integral part of the Liturgy of the Word. It is best sung - at least on Sundays. The psalms, which come from the Old Testament, were used by Christ Himself in prayer. Appropriate psalms have been selected to help the Assembly to meditate on, and respond to the Word of God in the First Reading. The standard procedure is that the Cantor sings the prescribed Psalm from the Lectern (Ambo) and the whole Assembly comes in on the sung response.

**THE GOSPEL ACCLAMATION;** This Gospel acclamation is sung while the Book of the Gospels is being carried to the Lectern (Ambo) accompanied by lighted torches and incense. This Acclamation Chant is sung by everyone present. The verse may be sung by the Cantor or Choir or even recited by the congregation. It's like a fanfare introducing the gospel of the Lord Jesus. The gospel is the high-point of the Liturgy of the Word.

**THE GOSPEL:** This is the high point of the Liturgy of the Word. It is reserved for the Deacon or Priest. While bowing before the altar the Priest says a quiet prayer before he proceeds to read the Gospel. To highlight its importance, the Book of the Gospels may be incensed before the Reading. After the Gospel, as he kisses the book, the Priest says quietly the following words: "Through the words of the gospel may our sins be wiped away". To highlight its importance the Servers may stand with lighted torches at each side of the Lectern (Ambo) while the Gospel is proclaimed.

**THE HOMILY (sermon):** The Homily is an integral part of the Sacred Liturgy. It helps the assembly to understand the Word of God, assimilate it and apply it to their lives. On Sundays or holydays the homily may not be omitted without a serious reason. It is reserved to the Priest or Deacon and is not to be given by a lay person. It's most appropriate that a period of silence follows the Homily, so that the people may take the Word of God to heart. The Homily may be given either from the Lectern or from the Priest's Chair.

*The Word of God first enters into my (mind) through my ears – 'faith comes through hearing' (Rom10:17.) It then must be allowed to 'drop from my head into my heart so that I make it my own and understand its implications and finally it reaches my hands*

*so that I put it into practice in my daily life, remembering St James's words 'faith without good works is dead'. Remember the three H's - hearing, heart and hands.*

**THE PROFESSION OF FAITH (CREED):** The purpose of the Nicene Creed (formulated in the fifth century at the Council of Nicaea) is that the whole Assembly may respond to the Word of God taken from the Readings and subsequently explained in the Homily. On more solemn occasions it can be sung but it is normally said. A profound bow is made by all at the phrase 'by the power of the Holy Spirit...and was made man'. At masses on Christmas Day and the Feast of the Annunciation all kneel at these words.

**THE BIDDING PRAYERS:** Having being nourished by the Word, the Faithful prays the 'bidding prayers' for the needs of the entire Church, for civil authorities, for those weighed down by various needs, for the local community and for the salvation of all.

### **Questions**

- 1. Do you think that we rush through the Liturgy of the Word too much? Discuss.*
- 2. Do you like when we sing the psalm bearing in mind that 'psalm' means 'song'. When you listen and come in on the psalm response, do you think it is a prayer? When singing the psalm should we stick to the exact words in the Lectionary? Discuss*
- 3. Should we incense the book of the gospels on Sundays as recommended?*
- 4. Should lay people be allowed to give homilies from time to time? Discuss*
- 5. How do you feel about singing the 'Credo' in Latin from time to time like we used to in sung masses before Vatican 11?*
- 6. How do you feel about lay people composing the Bidding Prayers rather than the priest as is done now?*