

Year of the Eucharist

October 2004 to October 2005

The Structure of the Mass

The Liturgy of the Word *continued*

The Liturgy of the Word is made up of proclamations from sacred Scripture, the Homily, Profession of Faith (*Creed*) and the Prayer of the Faithful (*General Intercessions*).

In July of 1998, Pope John Paul II issued an Apostolic Letter entitled *Dies Domini: On Keeping the Lord's Day Holy*. In this Letter, great emphasis is placed on our manner of listening to the Word of God proclaimed in the Celebration of the Eucharist. While Scripture is being proclaimed in the Liturgy, it is not so much a time for analytical listening, but for openness to a *dialogue between God and God's People*, a dialogue in which the wonders of salvation are proclaimed and the Covenant is continually restated.

"On their part, the People of God are drawn to respond to this dialogue of love by giving thanks and praise, also by demonstrating their fidelity to the task of continual conversion." (*Dies Domini*, #41)

The proclamation of the word in the Sunday Eucharistic celebration is not a time to explore or probe as one might in a scripture study session. Rather, proclamation of Scripture in the liturgy "takes on the solemn tone found in the Old Testament at moments when the Covenant was renewed, when the Law was proclaimed and the community of Israel was called to repeat its "YES", renewing its decision to be faithful to God and to obey his commandments." (#41)

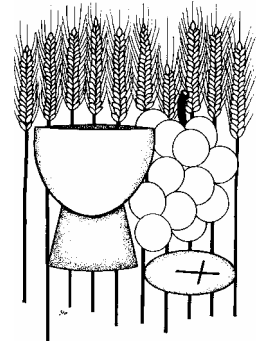
The proclamation of the word of God in the Celebration of the Mass is often referred to as the telling of our story as the People of God. It is that, but it is much more. While we do gain a sense of history as we actively listen to God's word proclaimed in the liturgy, more important is that we hear God's invitation to each one of us to enter into the mystery of God's love and the salvation offered to us through Jesus Christ. The Church teaches that Christ is truly present in the proclamation of the word of God in the liturgy. As if the awareness of God's presence is not astounding in itself, we must also realize that in speaking his word, God awaits our response. The question we ask ourselves then is "Do I listen in such a way that I will hear God's word to me and am I disposed to respond with my own renewed "YES" as did the People of God before me?"

It would be helpful, during this *Year of the Eucharist*, to ask ourselves another question: "Is the proclamation of Sacred Scripture at Sunday Mass the only time I am exposed to God's word"? If the answer is, "yes," it is time to make an important decision. In his most recent Apostolic Letter, the Letter just published on the *Year of the Eucharist*, Pope John Paul II says the following:

"In order truly to listen to the Lord in the Liturgy of the Word, we need to learn how to *listen with the heart*. This capacity to listen with the heart requires that we set aside specific moments of the day, and not just our leftover scraps of time, to dedicate ourselves to reading Sacred Scripture."

It is an attractive invitation... to "listen to the Lord" in the Liturgy of the Word by listening "with the heart." And God who awaits our response, also gives us grace to respond if we just ask and keep our hearts open.

Part 10 in a series on
The Year of the Eucharist
from
The Office of Rites and Sacraments
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FROM THE GENERAL INSTRUCTION ON THE ROMAN MISSAL...

SILENCE

#56. The Liturgy of the Word is to be celebrated in such a way as to promote meditation, and so any sort of haste that hinders recollection must clearly be avoided.

During the Liturgy of the Word, it is also appropriate to include brief periods of silence, accommodated to the gathered assembly, in which, at the prompting of the Holy Spirit, the word of God may be grasped by the heart and a response through prayer may be prepared.

It may be appropriate to observe such periods of silence, for example, before the Liturgy of the Word itself begins, after the first and second reading, and lastly at the conclusion of the homily.

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