

# Working Through the Liturgical Transitions

## ***Familiarity Breeds Comfortability***

In speaking with a couple parishioners this past week, I expressed the struggle I and other priests are having in finding the spiritual depth — that intimacy with Christ — during the Mass while making the adjustment to the new prayers. These parishioners expressed the same sort of struggle they are having. It's difficult since we have to be focused on the words until they become part of us. But, familiarity breeds comfortability. For the priests, not having that intimate feeling is most difficult during the consecration, trying to make sure we use the proper words of institution — those words of Jesus that we pronounce when the bread and wine become the real presence of Jesus Christ — his Body and Blood. These are intense moments for the priest standing in the presence of the One who offered himself for our sake.

So, if you are having difficulty adjusting, as an older priest friend said, "Keep working at it. The spiritual intimacy will return." And I say to you: "Keep working at it. Use the worship aids and make an honest effort as we are praying during mass." It will come to us, just as it did for the older parishioners who remember the change from Latin to English in the 1960's.

## ***Pew Cards***

Initially, Pastoral Council chose the red inserts because they included four different mass settings to be sung. The price was extremely beneficial, and these included the spoken responses of the people. While they are, and will be, beneficial for our singing, they are not so beneficial for following along easily with the prayerful responses. This forced some people to pick up a hymnal (which otherwise would not have occurred), but it has also caused problems for others who voiced concern because of the weight of the hymnal.

You have been heard. You have the availability of the hymnal insert, the missalette, and soon, you will have a printed card — singular. You'll still need to find the proper prayers on the card, but this should be much easier.

Please do your best to follow along with the Mass prayers and responses. They are going to be with us no matter what we may think. If we don't like the wording, we'll have to adjust. I am not a big proponent of all the wording, but I do recognize the value in most of the changes. The prayers of the priest do not easily roll off the tongue, and the phrasing is at times extremely awkward. Theologically, some of the new wording is very beneficial as it better expresses the depth of our faith and our Catholic beliefs — some of which were given over for the sake of simplicity and ecumenism years ago. Nevertheless, the same words are going to be used in every Catholic Church in the United States, so we cannot escape them.

Please encourage each other during this transition as we grow accustomed to these new prayers and responses.

## ***New Vocabulary***

Again, we've printed the bulletin insert containing the understanding of some words now included in our prayers — such as "consubstantial" and "incarnate". While some words are not part of our normal vocabulary, they provide depth to what is our faith concerning God's action in salvation history, of our belief of the relation of Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, and of the "real presence of Christ" in the Eucharist. They truly speak what we believe without compromise. They are "Catholic" from beginning to end. And that's what we profess to be — Catholic.

The inclusion of other words, phrases, and in some cases, whole sentences or paragraphs, provide a much deeper grasp of Catholic tradition. But we need to listen and seek further understanding and appreciation of the scriptural basis for most of these. With a few words or phrases, you and I will just shake our heads wondering how they are meant to enhance our prayer. As we will rejoice with some words, we'll also have to adjust to others.

## ***Purposeful Gestures***

As I have noted previously, the gestures we are asked to make are to help us grasp the greater meaning and reverence of our situation before God. Many "old" practices that were done to help us appreciate the sacredness of Church, faith, and most importantly, God, were set aside (more by local customs than anything else) as Catholics tried to become "one with" our Christian brothers and sisters of other faith expressions. In doing so, unfortunately, we moved away from a needed sense of humility before God, of acknowledgment of our sinfulness and need for God's great mercy and forgiveness, and, a true sense of wonder and awe in the presence of our Lord and God, who is always sacramentally present in any Catholic worship space. The striking of the breast, the bowing, the genuflecting, the sign of the cross, and even silence, are all purposefully used before, during, and after our worship.

## ***Finally***

**Please do not take the red supplements from the church.** We're already missing some, which leaves people empty-handed when they desire to sing along, you know, "make a joyful noise to the Lord!" Once the prayer cards are printed, we'll have some available for families to have one at home. Yes, some people besides Fr. Mike and I will study them.

Love and prayers,  
Fr. Tom