

A Mission Church

We begin a multi-week consideration of the "Liturgy," that which most call "Mass." However, as we'll quickly learn, there is more to what we do than that which we often consider. As we grow in this understanding, keep before you what has been shared the past two weeks. "**Humility**" (No. 3, 9/20) and "**Confession & Conversion**" (No. 4, 9/27) are necessary for our full participation in the saving act of Jesus Christ.

in our midst even before we begin offering praise and thanksgiving. This is a reminder that what we soon will celebrate is something that is always lived in life.

GET OUT OF YOURSELF

This sounds strange, but by the simple acts of kindness to our brothers and sisters in Christ prior to our liturgical celebration, and our taking time to free ourselves of our desires, concerns, and distractions, we free ourselves to truly give adoration, praise and glory to God our Father. It is an act that frees us to more fully realize a celebration of the wholeness of the Body of Christ, rather than a personal affair with God who may seem so removed.

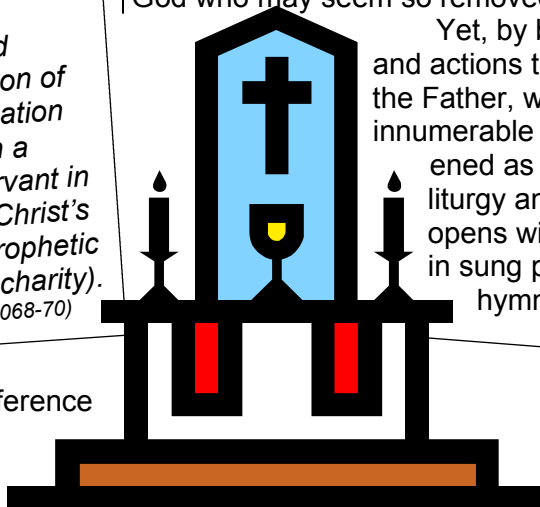
LITURGY: *The participation of the people of God in "the work of God." Through the liturgy Christ, our redeemer and high priest, continues the work of our redemption in, with, and through his church.*
In the New Testament the word "liturgy" refers not only to the celebration of divine worship but also to the proclamation of the Gospel and to active charity. In a liturgical celebration the Church is servant in the image of the Lord; she shares in Christ's priesthood (worship), which is both prophetic (proclamation) and kingly (service of charity).
— Catechism of the Catholic Church, #1068-70

When using the word "Liturgy" in reference to the Mass, we most often refer to it as the "Eucharistic Liturgy" since "liturgy" can refer to any time the people of God join together in a specific time of prayer meant to unite us with the work of salvation that is Christ's alone, especially found in the sacraments. Yes, this specifically implies that we cannot "do liturgy" without Christ's presence, and without Christ's mentality and purpose, both of which are the fulfillment of the will of the Father.

So even those not involved as liturgical ministers are called to minister to one another as we build up the Body of Christ, the People of God. This is done as we greet one another moving from the parking lot to the church, as we bless ourselves with the reminder of our baptismal life when we became one with Jesus Christ and the People of God, and when we acknowledge others in the church as brothers and sisters, especially those we do not recognize.

The work of A MISSION CHURCH is to make known the presence of our Savior, acknowledging him

Yet, by blessing God in words and actions to one another and to the Father, we are being blessed in innumerable ways. This is heightened as we pray before the liturgy and then as the liturgy opens with the Body gathering in sung prayer (our opening hymn).



THE OPENING PROCESSION
In some parishes you will hear the a person make announce-

ments, and then add, "Let us greet our celebrant..." That's something people thought was cute and homey when added in the early years of Vatican Council II liturgical reforms. The OPENING PROCESSION and HYMN are meant to gather our thoughts as one People of God in prayer as we acknowledge the WORD OF GOD entering our midst. This is the Word that will provide instruction, and then, in mystery, be brought to life in the Eucharist, where we will be fed and nourished to take the redeeming actions of Jesus Christ to the world, living what we profess — a oneness with, in, and through Jesus Christ.

TEAM SPIRIT

It's acknowledged that when the Steelers play, there is a fervor among many that unites them. Just look at the pre-game festivities at the stadium or in

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our neighborhoods. Look at what people are wearing when coming to the liturgy. Hear what they talk about until they begin preparations for the next game.

We should have that same unifying spirit whenever we gather for the Eucharistic Liturgy.

It is the Spirit of God that blesses us so that we may bless the Father and the Son, and in so doing, find our unity with God and with each other. We have gathered for, hopefully, the same purpose. We should be excited about renewing ourselves with God through the actions of Jesus Christ that we now take as our own.

THE OPENING RITES

We've already recalled the forgiveness of God, given us through baptism thru our Lord Jesus. That's why we bless ourselves entering the church and the community of believers.

We now bless our God as we acknowledge his presence within us as we make the sign of the cross.

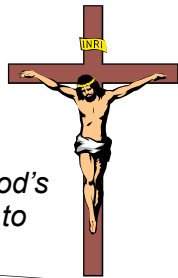
*This is followed by the **PENITENTIAL RITE** when we ask God's forgiveness that we may be returned to the perfection of*

*our baptismal life. With this said, we need to be mindful that it does not replace the actual sacrament of Reconciliation. A prayer of **confession**, asking God's forgiveness, along with intent to make*

*amends, frees us of our sins. Through these actions of the People of God we should experience a **conversion** of heart and mind, bringing us into oneness with our Lord's acceptance of the will of the Father.*

The **Penitential Rite** has three forms to be used as options.

1. Prayer and sprinkling, always to be used during the Easter season since it speaks of the new life won for us through the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ.
2. Confiteor, that is, "I confess..." which we pray together.
3. Three-fold prayers which conclude with "Lord, have mercy, Christ, have mercy, Lord, have mercy."



The sacrament of Reconciliation (or Confession) should not be avoided. [We'll discuss this sacrament later in the year.] And this is never sufficient when we are living in a state of serious (mortal) sin, the most common for Catholics being a willful choosing of other life activities over the unity God offers us in sharing in the Sunday Eucharistic Liturgy, the source and summit of Christian life.

DOUBLE WOW!

It's amazing how these penitential rites cause a swelling up of the life and love of God within us. It's realized when we enter into the singing of that ancient hymn of praise we call the **GLORIA**. How powerfully it is sung among Catholics. When done with a sense of renewed conversion, we find ourselves not entering into, but being drawn into the presence of God by the very Spirit of God. God is indeed working on our behalf even as we work in praise and adoration.

In the **OPENING PRAYER** a good listener will often be able to hear the message of the readings for that particular Sunday. It was planned that way, so as members of the one Body, we can now prepare to hear God speaking to us through what has been passed on to us through the scriptures.

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THE REALITIES

1. People are going to bring to our worship what they live in society. So we'll experience the good, and the not so good as we work at becoming one in, with, and through the Lord, our primary purpose in sharing in the liturgy.
2. Some people will be late. It's a reality of our society and culture. It's better that we accept this fact and learn to pray for them, reserving any judgment to God. In this way we remain focused on our role in the mission of all the baptized and remain free of sin..
3. Not everyone will sing. Some can't. Some are afraid to. Singing, as part of the worship experience, is our making a "joyful noise," as we're told in scripture. On the other hand, everyone can pray aloud.
4. Our gathering time should be a time of greeting, and of building up a unity through concern shown for another's health or life situation. Frivolous conversation and business affairs, however, should be eliminated as these can easily turn to gossip, and keep a person from truly preparing for the liturgy. Feel free to say, "Please, not now."



5. **A MISSION CHURCH** reminds us that we are all responsible for the building up of the People of God, and taking on the mission given through the apostles — to preach, teach, and sanctify — in word and action.