

LET'S TALK LITURGY! – Gathering Rites

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This month we will discuss the “first movement” of the Eucharistic Liturgy: the Introductory Rites, sometimes called the Gathering Rites.

Even before we begin the official rites on any given Sunday, we all participate in the gathering of the community. We INTENTIONALLY choose to come to QAC bringing with us all that has been our week. We greet each other and perhaps “catch up” with some of our fellow worshipers. We find a seat and look through the bulletin for the Order of Service for the day. We begin to focus on what we have come to do as our Community Coordinator calls us to a few moments of silence. Then the official Gathering Rites begin.

There are many pieces that **may** be included in the Gathering Rites:

- Processional song or music as the ministers make their way to the sanctuary
- Sign of the Cross and greeting by the Celebrant
- Introduction to the celebration of the day (by the Celebrant, another minister or community member)
- Penitential Rite which may include:
 - Confiteor (“I confess to Almighty God, ...”)
 - Kyrie (“Lord have mercy. Christ have mercy.”)
 - Sprinkling Rite – recalling our Baptisms (replacing the above)
- Gloria (NOT during Advent or Lent); preferably sung when used
- Opening Prayer or Collect (preceded by a moment of silence)

So, is there a purpose for what we do in these rites? Absolutely!! We have come from disparate places (externally and internally) to pray TOGETHER. For that to happen well, we must be formed as one people – with one communal intent. These rites help us to get to that place together. We have an opportunity to get a feel for the theme or main thrust of the readings through the processional song and/or the introduction to the celebration. We recognize together that we are a sinful people saved by the mercy of our God. We praise our God with uplifted hearts and voices. And, finally, we focus on the character of our celebration as we pray together through the Celebrant.

We are now formed as one people and we should be ready as a community to hear God's Word with openness and humility.

Now, let's look quickly at the practicalities of the Gathering Rites as they are planned at QAC. The community members who plan the Sunday liturgies work very hard to make the experience for all of us as prayerful as possible. They give a lot of thought to the readings of the day and how best to enhance those readings (and the Breaking of the Bread) by way of music, environment and the flow of the celebration. The Gathering Rites set the tone. That may mean we are more jubilant – or less – in song. If the length of a liturgy is of concern, for example, you may see the Gloria used as the Processional. But, it is important to remember that the Gathering Rites are of lesser importance than

the Liturgy of the Word or the Breaking of the Bread. So, the planners are always working to keep that balance in proportion.

In January 2016 we will begin to look at the next movement of our symphony of prayer: the Liturgy of the Word. Until then, be especially mindful of the Gathering Rites and their role in our Sunday celebration. Be more cognizant of being formed as community and how that enhances your prayer!