

LET'S TALK LITURGY! – Introduction to our Eucharistic Celebration

Prepared for the Liturgy Committee by Charlette Buescher (published originally in the September 2015 edition of QAC Spirit)

A few months back, "liturgy" was a hot topic in our community: things that people liked or did not like about our Sunday worship, things that are uncomfortable for some, things that others are missing. It was suggested that an overall discussion of liturgy might be helpful for everyone. Let's begin!

The word "liturgy" comes from the Greek *leitourgia* which basically means public work or public service. So, liturgy refers to the public worship of the Church. It includes the celebration of all seven Sacraments and the celebration of the Liturgy of the Hours. We at QAC often use the word "liturgy" to refer to our Sunday celebration of the Eucharist. This discussion will begin by talking about Eucharist. As we move forward with these articles, we may spend some time with the celebrations of the other Sacraments.

Anyone who participates with us on Sunday mornings for more than a time or two will quickly see that there is a structure about what we do at those celebrations. There is a beginning, a middle and an end. Specifically, we can talk about four parts of the Eucharistic celebration:

- Gathering
- Story Telling (Liturgy of the Word)
- Meal Sharing (Liturgy of the Eucharist)
- Sending Forth or Commissioning

Each of these parts has its own important function as a part of the whole liturgy. I like to think about them as similar to the four movements of a symphony – moving us along as a community to a place of prayer and worship and union with our God.

You might also see some resemblance in this structure to the Emmaus story in Luke's Gospel. As the disciples walked along, Jesus joined them and they had casual conversation (Gathering). Then Jesus broke the Scriptures open for them – told the stories in a way that made their current situation very clear. At the disciples' request Jesus stayed to share a meal with them. Suddenly, they recognized Jesus and felt compelled to hurry back to share the good news of their encounter (Commissioning).

I am sure you can think of other times in your own life when this model of being community was present. Thanksgiving Day? Christmas Day? A special birthday or anniversary celebration? Even the end of the day meal as the family gathers from the activities of the day? It is a very human thing we do on Sunday mornings at QAC – a very human activity infused with a spiritual, God-time dimension.

In the November 2015 Spirit article we will discuss the Gathering part of our celebration. Until then, look for the times in your day to day life where you see this ritual model played out.