

LET'S TALK LITURGY! – Liturgy of the Word: Part 2

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Last time, our discussion focused on the mechanics of the first part of the Liturgy of the Word: the reading and hearing of God's Word. We talked about how the readings are chosen, connections (if any) among them, and the order of their proclamation.

I am going to digress a bit from further explanation of the Rite to ask a question: Did you know that The Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy (Sacrosanctum Concilium), one of the great documents of the Second Vatican Council, identifies four ways in which Christ is **REALLY** present in any liturgical celebration? Christ is truly present during our Eucharistic celebrations:

- in the person of the minister (the priest);
- in the bread and wine changed into His Body and Blood;
- in the **WORD** that is proclaimed;
- in the gathered assembly (that's US!!).

So, it is important that each of us participates in an active manner in the Liturgy of the Word. Jesus is just as present for us to receive and “become one with” during the Liturgy of the Word as He is in the Liturgy of the Eucharist! How might we participate actively in this part of the celebration when we are just sitting in the pew?

Coming prepared to hear the Sunday readings is one way to insure our participation. We might read the readings during the week prior to gathering on Sunday – and maybe read them more than once. We should try as best we can to listen attentively and without distraction. I know THAT is hard to do, especially if you have small children. But those small Christians will learn from you if you try to show them that listening on Sunday is important. When you visit with a dear friend or family member, I am sure you try to listen to what they say without giving way to distractions. That is what Jesus is asking of us as He shares himself in the Word with us.

This leads to the next two structural parts of the Liturgy of the Word: the **homily** and **silence**. The purpose of the homily is to break open the Word of God for the assembly who has just heard it proclaimed. This means taking that Word and bringing it to our life situation today, helping us to internalize the messages and to see what those messages mean for each of us in our daily lives. Just as the bread is broken for our consumption later in the celebration, the Word is broken in the homily for us to feed on!

Silence follows the homily so that we might thank God for the gift of the Word! It also gives us time to really let that Word sink into our hearts and change our lives for the coming week. This is one time when we can plan the phrase or two which will trigger us to return to the Word even as we sit at our desks at work or cook dinner and fold the laundry.

Next time we will complete our discussion of the Liturgy of the Word. During this holy season of Lent, may we all try to actively participate in our Sunday Liturgy of the Word!!