

Liturgy of the Word

Week Three Bulletin Insert: New Translation of the Roman Missal

The *Ecumenical Council of Trent* (1562 AD) encouraged teaching at Mass: “Lest Christ’s flock go hungry . . . the Holy Synod commands pastors and all others having the care of souls to give frequent instructions during the celebration of Mass, either personally or through others. . . . Among other things, they should include some explanation of the mystery of this most holy Sacrifice, #11.” We will now fulfill this command as we introduce the New Translation of the Roman Missal. This weekend we focus on the **Liturgy of the Word**. According to the General Instruction of the Roman Missal; “The main part of the Liturgy of the Word is made up of the readings from Sacred Scripture together with the chants occurring between them. The Homily, Profession of Faith, and Prayer of the Faithful, however, develop and conclude this part of the Mass. For in the readings, as explained by the Homily, God speaks to his people, opening up to them the mystery of redemption and salvation, and offering them spiritual nourishment; and Christ himself is present in the midst of the faithful through his word. By their silence and singing the people make God’s word their own, and they also affirm their adherence to it by means of the Profession of Faith. Finally, having been nourished by it, they pour out their petitions in the Prayer of the Faithful for the needs of the entire Church and for the salvation of the whole world, #55.”

Method of Choosing Readings for the Mass - The readings for daily Mass are based on a two year cycle. Sunday Mass readings are based on a three year cycle. It is the Church’s earnest desire to proclaim the majority of the Scriptures within this time period, thus keeping the full breadth of the *Word of God* present in the minds of the faithful.

Readings from the Sacred Scripture - “In the readings, the table of God’s word is prepared for the faithful, and the riches of the Bible are opened to them, #57.” “In the sacred books, the Father who is in heaven comes lovingly to meet his children, and talks with them,” (Catechism of the Catholic Church, 104). “For Sundays and solemnities, three readings are assigned: that is, from a Prophet, an Apostle, and a Gospel. By these the Christian people are brought to know the continuity of the work of salvation according to God’s wonderful plan, #357.” “If there are several readings, it is well to distribute them among a number of lectors, #109.”

Silence - “The **Liturgy of the Word** is to be celebrated in such a way as to promote meditation, and so any haste that hinders recollection must clearly be avoided. During the **Liturgy of the Word**, it is also appropriate to include brief periods of silence, accommodated to the gathered assembly, in which, at the prompting of the Holy Spirit, the word of God may be grasped by the heart and a response through prayer may be prepared. It may be appropriate to observe such periods of silence, for example, before the **Liturgy of the Word** itself begins, after the first and second reading, and lastly at the conclusion of the homily, #56.”

Psalm - “After the first reading comes the responsorial *Psalm*, which is an integral part of the Liturgy of the Word and holds great liturgical and pastoral importance, because it fosters meditation on the word of God. It is preferable that the responsorial *Psalm* be sung, #61.”

Alleluia - “After the reading that immediately precedes the Gospel, the *Alleluia* or another chant indicated by the rubrics is sung, as required by the liturgical season. . . . The assembly of the faithful welcomes and greets the Lord who is about to speak to it in the Gospel and professes its faith by means of the chant, #62.”

Gospel - “The reading of the *Gospel* is the high point of the **Liturgy of the Word**. The Liturgy itself teaches that great reverence is to be shown to it by setting it off from the other readings with special marks of honor: whether on the part of the minister appointed to proclaim it, who prepares himself by a blessing or prayer; or on the part of the faithful, who stand as they listen to it being read and through their acclamations acknowledge and confess Christ present and speaking to them; or by the very marks of reverence that are given to the *Book of the Gospels*, #60.” After the Gospel is announced all use the thumb to make the sign of the cross on their forehead, mouth, and breast (see #134). A prayer is said; “Lord, help me to understand Your Gospel with my mind, to proclaim it with my lips, and to believe it with all my heart.”

Homily - “The *Homily* . . . is necessary for the nurturing of the Christian life, #65.” In the *Homily* the homilist tries to relate the readings from Sacred Scripture to the lives of the people today through a short explanation of the Gospel message. “The *Homily* is preached in order that a community of believers who have gathered to celebrate the liturgy may do so more deeply and more fully - more faithfully - and thus be formed for Christian witness in the world,” (The Homily in the Sunday Assembly #43).

Profession of Faith - “The purpose of the . . . Profession of Faith, or *Creed*, is that the whole gathered people may respond to the word of God proclaimed in the readings taken from Sacred Scripture and explained in the homily and that they may also call to mind and confess the great mysteries of the faith by reciting the rule of faith in a formula approved for liturgical use, before these mysteries are celebrated in the Eucharist, #67.” Beginning the Creed with “I” makes it very clear that each person has to take personal responsibility for what they believe. Professing “of all things visible and invisible” strengthens our belief in what can only be seen with eyes of faith. “Incarnate of the Virgin Mary” clarifies that the birth of Jesus was very different than our own birth. It reminds us that although Jesus as man was born into the world, as the Son of God He has always existed with the Father and the Holy Spirit. “At these words [was incarnate] . . . all make a profound bow, #137.” Finally, in professing “confess” instead of “acknowledge” we are dragged from just an intellectual stating of our faith with our minds to a confession of our faith from our hearts to the point that we are willing to die for our faith.

Prayers of the Faithful - “In the *Prayer of the Faithful*, the people respond in a certain way to the word of God which they have welcomed in faith and, exercising the office of their baptismal priesthood, offer prayers to God for the salvation of all. It is fitting . . . that petitions be offered for the holy Church, for civil authorities, for those weighed down by various needs, for all men and women, and for the salvation of the whole world, #69.” “It is for the priest celebrant to direct this prayer from the chair. He himself begins it with a brief introduction, by which he invites the faithful to pray, and likewise concludes with a prayer. The intentions announced should be sober, be composed freely but prudently, and be succinct, and they should express the prayer of the entire community, #71.”