

W H Y D O W E . . .

EASTER, 2005



PREPARE FOR MASS & ARRIVE EARLY?

The *Introduction for the Lectionary for Mass* tells us that the “intimate connection between the liturgy of the word and the liturgy of the Eucharist in the Mass should prompt the faithful to be present right from the beginning of the celebration, to take part attentively, and to prepare themselves in so far as possible to hear the word, especially by learning beforehand more about Sacred Scripture” (#48). Pope John Paul II tells us that the “Sunday assembly is the privileged place of unity” (*Dies Domini*, #36). Indeed, the *Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy*, the foundation of our understanding of Roman Catholic liturgy, clearly states that the real presence of Christ is found in the sacrifice of the

Mass, not only in the *consecrated bread and wine*, but also in the *person of the priest*, in the *word proclaimed*, and lastly in the *gathered Church* (#7).

At St. Thérèse, we continue to exhort our members to understand their role in Sunday Eucharist as the primary minister of the Eucharist: the **assembly**. Members of our Church are expected to participate in Sunday Mass every week, and to prepare by reading and reflecting on the scriptures in advance. As members of the assembly, we should be there *before* the liturgy begins. Coming late or at the last minute (if that can be avoided) says we are only spectators dropping in to see a performance. On the rare occasion that we are late,

we are expected to wait for a quiet moment (never during a prayer or reading) to take our place, so that we do not interrupt the prayer of the assembly.

HAVE SO MUCH SILENCE?

The revised *General instruction of the Roman Missal* (2000) calls us to make more use of sacred silence in our liturgies, “in which the word of God is taken into the heart by the fostering of the Holy Spirit, and its response is prepared through prayer” (#56).

Make use of the sacred silence before the gathering song, after each reading & psalm, after the homily, and after the Communion procession.

VISITING? NEW?

You may have noticed a few practices which are different from your home parish, or the parish from which you came.

This newsletter explains the theology and the thought behind these practices.

STAND SO MUCH?

The *General Instruction of the Roman Missal (GIRM)*, which is liturgical law for Roman Catholics, has this to say about posture in the Mass: “A **common posture**, to be observed by all participants, is a sign of the unity of the members of the Christian community gathered for the sacred liturgy: it both

expresses and fosters the intention and spiritual attitude of the participants” (#42). At St. Thérèse, we stand together at the times indicated by the *GIRM*:

- During the opening rites
- For the gospel

- For the Profession of Faith and the Intercessions
- From the invitation before the Eucharistic Prayer *until after the prayer after Communion*.

In the United States, most communities kneel after the *Holy, Holy*, (see *STAND*, page 2)

LEAVE EARLY?

WE DON'T! Leaving early — especially during the Communion procession — models a disrespect for the presence of Christ in the Eucharist and in the gathered assembly. It says, “I’ve gotten what I need; I’m leaving now.” Instead, we stand in union with our brothers and sisters, singing and supporting them in their journey. St. Augustine said that, in Communion, we “become what

you eat.” The Church becomes the Body and Blood of Christ. Pope John Paul II, in declaring 2005 the Year of the Eucharist, reminds us that “the Eucharist is both the source of ecclesial unity and its greatest manifestation” (*Mane Nobiscum Domine*, #21).

After Communion (which means, after everyone has taken Communion), **together** we kneel or sit for silent

prayer, a prayer which is summed up by the priest in the Prayer After Communion.

After that, we have a few brief announcements, and then we are sent: “Go in peace to love and serve the Lord.” At St. Thérèse, we take that direction seriously, processing out **with** the priest, singing a song of thanksgiving as we go forth: “one, two, five at a time, going back to neighborhoods

homes, roles and jobs, studies and waiting. But Sunday by Sunday the world is here, being transformed by Christ!” (from *Gather Faithfully Together*, a 1997 pastoral letter of Cardinal Roger Mahony to the Church of Los Angeles, #78).

So, as soon as the proclaimer and the priest process out, follow behind (singing, of course) into the world!

HAVE A COLLECTION?

It is a familiar routine. A collection is taken up—for a baby gift, a departing colleague or a local event. With varying degrees of willingness, we put our money in the basket and feel we have done our duty.

That same invitation is made to us in an entirely different context every Sunday as we gather to offer God thanks and praise. In the Liturgy of

the Word, we listen to God’s voice in the scriptures, proclaim our belief in the creed, and offer prayers for the needs of the church and the world. Then a collection is taken up.

It is commonly understood that the money given during the collection will be used to support the ongoing work of the Church. This includes setting aside a portion of

those funds to be used directly for those in need.

Every member of our parish is expected to give regularly to the Sunday collection, because our monetary contributions are more than just financial transactions; they symbolize our willingness to place our lives at God’s disposal and to be ourselves transformed into the Body and Blood of Christ.

“The Eucharist is both the source of ecclesial unity and its greatest manifestation.”

- John Paul II

STAND (CONT.)

until the *Great Amen*. At St. Thérèse, we stand throughout the Eucharistic Prayer, an exception which the *GIRM* allows (#43), because we have many members who would be unable to kneel for such an extended period of time, and standing would be the next most desirable posture.

Many also notice that we stand throughout the Communion procession, including when we return from taking Communion. Again, this **common posture**, directed by the Church, indicates our **Communion** with one another, as well as with God. After everyone has taken Communion (and we have given Communion

to be taken to the sick), then — together — we kneel or sit for a period of silent prayer, which is then concluded by the Prayer After Communion, voiced by the priest.

Of course, many communities, for a variety of reasons, do not follow these Church directives. **So how do we**

know what to do when we visit other parish communities? The answer is simple: follow the principle of **uniformity** set forth in the *GIRM*, and do what that community does. The Eucharist is never a place for standing out; the *GIRM* clearly states that we are to “shun any appearance of individualism or division,” keeping before our eyes that we “have only one Father in heaven” (#95).