

## Pastor's Message

In this week's reflection on the Mass we look at how we begin the celebration. These beginning ritual actions are called the introductory rites. They are meant to get us ready to celebrate God's covenant of love with us and to focus our attention on why we gather. The parts of the introductory rites are: the opening (gathering) song, the greeting, the penitential rite, the Gloria and the gathering prayer.

We in the United States unfortunately are not a singing community. Many cultures and most early cultures used song to gather the community as one people. St. Augustine in the 5th century said that those who sing pray twice! I presume he meant by the words of the song and by the raising of our voices in song. Our Bible psalms are really ancient songs to be sung not read. We at St. Matthew's are very blessed to have a great music ministry lead by Madge Devine. Madge, our singers and our musicians do a fabulous job aligning our music with the themes of our Sunday readings. Madge also chooses songs that can be sung by all of us and that is the purpose of our gathering song. Through our united voices raised in song to God we unite with each other in one common voice. Simply by singing we begin to realize we are one body in Christ gathered to celebrate Christ's presence among us. Please sing. All our voices joined together will *make a joyful noise to the Lord (Ps. 100:1-2)*.

During the song the priest approaches the altar, bows to it and kisses it. The altar, for this purpose, is not only the table of the Lord and the altar of sacrifice but it is the sign of Jesus Christ present among us. Kissing the altar is both a sign of veneration and respect. Kissing the altar is also an act of devotion and adoration of Christ. The priest is only the servant of the people gathered; he presides but remember that we all celebrate the Mass.

Next we remind ourselves in whose name we gather: *In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit*; and the priest presiding greets the people. The missal (the book in which the parts of the Mass are described and organized) gives the priest three different ways to greet the community. I like to use the one which reminds us that we gather in the name of the Trinity: *The Grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, the love of the Father, and the communion of the Holy Spirit be with you*. Now we are ready to acknowledge who we are and why we are all gathered here. Stay tuned for next week's installment.

*Fr. Chris*