

Pastor's Message

Do you know what we are singing when we sing "alleluia"? That word is from the Hebrew "halelu-Yah" which means "praise-Yahweh". "Yahweh" is one of the holy names given to God in the Bible. We are singing out our praise to God whenever we sing "Alleluia".

As I have repeated often in these messages on the Mass, the Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy emphasizes over and over that we together celebrate the Mass. The "full, conscious and active participation" is required of us all in the Mass. The alleluia is our way to prepare and welcome the presence of Christ among us in the reading of the Gospel. Remember that our first reading almost always comes from the Hebrew Bible (Old Testament) to which we reply in song with our psalm response of gratitude, praise and sometimes petition. Then we read from one of the early letters written to a church community in our earliest days, often from a letter of St. Paul. After each reading we should spend a few moments, perhaps even as much as a minute, in silence to allow God's Word to penetrate our minds and hearts. Then we are required to respond to what we have heard and our response is always gratitude and praise. So in response to the Word of God we have already heard and in anticipation of the Gospel Word we are about to hear we sing "Alleluia". As we read in the Book of Revelation chapter 19 we sing this alleluia song just like the angels in heaven sing before the throne of God. We sing the song of the angels as we prepare to meet Jesus Christ in his holy Word, the Gospel.

The alleluia song is also meant as a way to accompany the procession of the Book of the Gospels (Matthew, Mark, Luke and John) from the altar to the ambo (lectern) from which you and I will hear God's message to us for the week. The Mass will often use song to accompany or cover a procession or movement from one place to another in our ancient rite. We sing, for example, when our gifts are being brought to the altar or when we are all coming to communion. If we all gather our voices in song we all feel included and we "make a joyful noise unto the Lord" (see Psalm 98 & 100). No matter how you think your voices sound please consider singing. As you all know too well, I do not have a great voice but if we all join together our voices do "make (that) joyful noise to the Lord".

In Lent, as you may recall, we stop singing the alleluia because we are in waiting, preparing for the suffering, death and resurrection of the Lord. The absence of the alleluia song in Lent is to remind us of our anticipation and our waiting for the resurrected presence of the Lord with us after his suffering and death. The Easter alleluia song for the first time at the Easter vigil and Easter Masses is a rousing song of praise that our Lord is risen from the dead, never to abandon us again. Life is made new. What more could we do when we realize that great event of our salvation than to sing "Alleluia"!

Fr. Chris