

Pastor's Message

Next weekend Advent begins and these pastor's messages will focus on the readings for the Advent and Christmas seasons. I will return to my comments on the Eucharist when we return to ordinary time in January. This is a good time to pause in our conversation about the Mass because we are ending our reflections on the words of institution by considering the memorial acclamation(s). Last week I commented that in some eastern rite traditions the people participate more actively and vocally throughout the Eucharistic prayer (EP) with phrases of gratitude and praise. After the words of institution in the Roman Catholic Mass the people's response is reserved for the memorial acclamation. The church gives us three responses that can be used as our reply to the bread and wine becoming the body and blood of Jesus: 1. We proclaim your death, O Lord, and profess your resurrection.... 2. When we eat this bread and drink this cup, we proclaim your death, O Lord.... and 3. Save us, Savior of the world.... The priest invites us all to "Let us proclaim the mystery of faith". Then, in song, we reply with one of the above responses. Actually the priest should not invite our response, an acclamation should arise from the assembly spontaneously. This proclamation of remembrance of what Jesus asked us to do at the Last Supper is called *anamnesis* (remembrance, commemoration) in Greek. At the Last Supper Christ Jesus asked us to "Do this in memory of me" and so that is what we do and that is what we recall in our memorial acclamation.

One last thought before we move into Advent. It wasn't until the 13th century that the priest held up (elevated) the bread and the wine at Mass. Think about it. If we were having a meal with the Lord he may point to the bread and say "This is my body" or to the chalice and say "This is my blood". Or he might hold it out for us but not elevate it to the sky, right? So why does the priest elevate the bread and wine at the consecration? This action came into practice when people in the middle ages because of the growing sense of sin in that time felt less and less worthy to receive the body and blood of Christ. So, instead of receiving they began to venerate and worship from afar and they needed the priest to elevate the bread and wine so that they could see better and do God homage. It was at this time that Eucharistic adoration also began. If you cannot "eat this bread and drink this cup" because you have an out-sized sense of your own guilt and sin at least you can adore Christ in the form of the host from afar. The revision of the Mass was meant to restore the celebration to its origin as a meal around the table with the Lord.

The consecration of the bread and the wine at Mass, the calling down of God's Holy Spirit on our simple gifts of bread and wine, and with our acknowledgment that we believe "Christ has died, Christ is risen, Christ will come again!"

Fr. Chris