

"Come to the Feast" Part I

Exploring what we do and why we do it.

A basic introduction to the Roman Catholic understanding of the Sacrifice of the Mass.

BUILDING THE FOUNDATION AND CONTEXT

*** WE COME TO WORSHIP *** Worship is about GOD and not us! We come to praise and thank God for the blessings and gifts we receive.

*** WORSHIP can be Private or Communal *** Private prayer/devotions help develop our relationship with Jesus. Communal/public prayer gathers us together as community, as Church, as the Body of Christ. Both private and personal prayer are critical and feed each other. All the Sacraments have a communal dimension.

*** THE SACRIFICE OF THE MASS *** The Mass has its roots in the Passover meal, especially as celebrated by Jesus at the Last Supper. The Passover is a meal celebrating God's deliverance of the Chosen People. Jesus, a Jew, chose the occasion to enlarge the Passover significance. We believe that Jesus Christ instituted the Holy Eucharist and the Priesthood at this celebration, and by the washing of the feet, connected humility and service to others as hallmarks of what it means to be a disciple of Jesus. Jesus used the very human experience of a MEAL to illustrate and model the SACRIFICE he would make for all through his passion and death. All who are called to this MEAL/EUCCHARIST are called to lives of service and sacrifice as well. (See Lk 22:14-20, 24-27) (See also Jn 13:12-15)

*** THE SACRIFICE OF THE MASS *** The Mass is not a "play" or a "pageant" or a "re-enactment". When we celebrate the Eucharist, Christ is again made present Body, Blood, Soul and Divinity. Christ is "really present"! This is why a red candle burns in our churches and the Eucharist is reserved for prayer and sick calls, in the Tabernacle: We believe in the Real Presence.

*** We are called to FULL, CONSCIOUS and ACTIVE participation *** Unlike other "events" we "attend", worship at Mass is not a passive, spectator sport! "FULL" refers to our willingness to be present/ tuned in. Desire is more important than duty. "CONSCIOUS" refers to being aware of myself, aware of God in others around me, aware of the actions and prayers and readings; the songs and the silence. It is not my "private" time for prayer. "ACTIVE" refers to my engagement in worship through active listening, prayers, prayers and songs, gestures and posture. Since worship is not about "me" as an individual but the community as a collective group, "my" preferences, likes and dislikes give way to the Body of Christ. Not unlike a sports team or musical group, "we" support, encourage, and strengthen each other for the good of the whole.

*** THE ROMAN CATHOLIC CHURCH IS A LITURGICAL CHURCH *** Some other faith traditions choose their own favorite Scriptures (or not) to preach on and do not celebrate seasons such as Advent, Lent, etc. We follow an ancient schedule which opens up the Scriptures and the life of Christ in a systemic way. The weekends are on a three-year cycle and the weekdays are on a two-year cycle. We have an amazing exposure to a very large part of the Bible. This happens within a Liturgical Calendar which begins with Advent (4 wks), and follows through Christmas, a short “Ordinary Time”, followed by Lent (40 days), Holy Week, the Easter Season (50 days), followed by Pentecost Sunday and back to Ordinary Time.

*** WHEN WE COME TO COMMUNAL WORSHIP, WE GATHER, WE LISTEN AND WE RESPOND *** These three-fold movements happen over and over during our public worship. “GATHER” means everything we bring to worship- our moods and concerns, our physical bodies, everything we are. We gather it all together and bring it to the Lord. To “LISTEN” at Mass involves reading and prayers of course; but also includes listening to what’s going on in our hearts and minds as well as the sounds and silence within the Mass. And always, there is a time to “RESPOND”. Our responding to the dialogue prayers, the “AMEN” at the end of a prayer, our singing (no matter what kind of voice we have), as well as what we do when we leave Church and return to our daily lives. Our life IS a response to the Lord speaking to us in the Mass.

*** The EUCHARISTIC CELEBRATION/MASS has several parts *** The Mass begins with the INTRODUCTORY RITES

- Gathering Song
- Sign of the Cross
- Penitential Rite (Lord have Mercy)
- Gloria
- Opening Prayer

All of the above transitions and prepares us for

THE LITURGY OF THE WORD

- Old Testament Proclamation
- Responsorial Psalm (normally sung)
- New Testament Proclamation (weekend/Sunday)
- Silent response
- Gospel Acclamation/Alleluia (normally sung)
- Gospel Proclamation
- Homily
- Assembly prays the Creed
- Assembly prays Prayers of the Faithful

*** LITURGY OF THE EUCHARIST FOLLOWS**