

Catholic Ministries Appeal 2014

Our parish's participation in the 2014 Catholic Ministries Appeal continues with our showing of the special Catholic Ministries Appeal video at all Masses this weekend. My hope in showing it, as we did last year, is that the video will give you a better idea of all the good work that is done on the diocesan level, and therefore why your contribution to the Appeal is so crucial. In addition, as we know, our own parish benefits financially when we achieve our goal, and especially when we surpass our goal.

I thank everyone who has already made a pledge to the Appeal, and if you have not yet done so, I ask you to please consider participating this year. Thank you!

Liturgical Minister Training

Our recruitment of new liturgical ministers — Readers, Extraordinary Ministers of Holy Communion, and Ushers — continues (recruitment for new altar servers will take place separately soon). Having an adequate number of liturgical ministers is important so that the liturgy can be enacted in the best possible way in terms of its reverence and smooth flow. Each and every person in the liturgical assembly must be an active and vital participant, but those who will serve in a particular ministry of service to the entire assembly are needed as well. We **WANT YOU** and we **NEED YOU** to step forward to offer yourself as a Reader, or Extraordinary Minister of Holy Communion, or as an Usher. Please consider doing so; you can respond as described in the information elsewhere in the bulletin.

Your Role at Mass as a Member of the Body of Christ

I would like to spend some time with you offering some thoughts on what might be called liturgical formation; I offer these ideas for your own reflection and renewal, and for my own.

These thoughts center around the idea that **everyone** has a liturgical role to play in our celebration of the Eucharist. True, there are the liturgical ministries mentioned above, where some from the assembly step forward to serve their brothers and sisters in a specific role, but it

is also true to say that every member of the assembly has a liturgical role to play as an active participant — as an “offerer” who is there as a priestly (*i.e.*, baptized) person to offer their life in union with Christ's. To do that, one need be nothing more than a “person in the pew,” but it is necessary that they offer themselves completely, 100%, both interiorly and exteriorly.

One reason this is so important is because the external affects the internal, and *vice versa*. Another reason is because in fully participating in everything that the members of the assembly are supposed to do — singing, responding, sitting, standing, kneeling, gesturing (*e.g.*, the sign of the cross, the bow during the Creed, the exchange of peace, *etc.*) — participants are **encountering the presence of Christ** through the words, actions, sounds, sights and sometimes smells (*e.g.*, incense) of the liturgy. In addition, fully participating in this way becomes an important witness to others and serves to deepen others' faith as they are inspired by the way we are all engaged in the common ritual actions. The presence of Christ shines through in all the words and actions of the Mass.

This is why it's important, as I always say, to **pray the Mass** rather than praying *at* Mass. In other words, we don't do our own thing or do what we feel like doing, but rather we pray the Mass as the Church gives it to us because it is through those actions that we encounter Christ. In this sense, knowing what **not** to do is as important as knowing what to do! The Roman Rite is marked by a noble simplicity, and the presence of Christ is made manifest to us when we as His Body enter into actions together, as one. After all, one of the primary effects of the Eucharist is to build up the unity of the Body of Christ. Contrary to what people often think, Eucharistic communion does not mean “my individual communion with Jesus” but rather **our communion with one another in Jesus**. Union with Christ is achieved only through union with His Body, the Church, which means the other members of His Body — the brothers and sisters who join together in the offering of the Sacrifice.

Therefore, an important responsibility of each member of the Body at worship is to make sure the presence of Christ shines through

clearly through one's active participation, a participation that has unity as its core. Article 42 of the *General Instruction of the Roman Missal* tells us, "The gestures and bodily posture of both the Priest, the Deacon, and the ministers, and also of the people, must be conducive to making the entire celebration resplendent with beauty and **noble simplicity, to making clear the true and full meaning of its different parts**, and to fostering the participation of all. Attention must therefore be paid to what is determined by this *General Instruction* and by the traditional practice of the Roman Rite and to what serves the common spiritual good of the People of God, **rather than private inclination or arbitrary choice.**" (emphasis added)

I call to your attention this idea of "noble simplicity" so that the true meaning of all the parts may be made clear, and to see why avoiding our own private inclinations or arbitrary choices is important. To my mind, this is so for two reasons. First, concerning the avoidance of private inclinations or arbitrary choices: this means we don't do what we feel like doing, because Mass is not about expressing our own private or personal feelings or piety — we don't add something, be it word or gesture, just because it might look holy or because it might feel good to do it. That leads to the second point, which connects with the idea of noble simplicity: when we go adding these things individually on our own, we wind up obscuring the central and important gestures and actions of the liturgy.

We all know what static is when listening to a broadcast, and we are probably familiar with what used to be called "snow" in a poor television picture (nowadays, we encounter digital "snow" when the picture breaks up or when we see pixels). When we go adding our own individual pious gestures into the liturgy not called for by the liturgy, we create a kind of liturgical "static" that is an expression of individuals doing their own thing rather than a unified expression of the members of a body acting as one to create a beautiful and noble simplicity. We should consider the notion, then, that when people add all sorts of gestures and actions not called for in the ritual, we could wind up creating a kind of liturgical "static" or distraction. Some examples that come to mind

would be if we make the sign of the cross or genuflect to the processional cross (the rubrics call for no such actions; we make the sign of the cross as the first action after the priest arrives at the chair, and we genuflect only to the Blessed Sacrament upon entering or leaving the church); if we make the sign of the cross at the end of the Penitential Act when the priest says, "May almighty God have mercy on us, forgive us our sins, and bring us to everlasting life" or at the words "Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord" during the *Holy, Holy*; (again, so such sign is called for at those times); if people in the pews hold their hands out in an outstretched position during the *Our Father*, and raise them high during the Doxology that follows it (the rubric is only for the priest to do extend his arms); if we genuflect before receiving Holy Communion instead of making a bow of the head (bowing the head is the sign called for). We might be able to add others to the list based on observation. That's not to say that prayerful gestures or making the sign of the cross are in any way bad! It is, however, to point out the difference between praying on one's own, when we should feel free to make whatever expressions of piety we feel moved to make, and praying as part of a liturgical assembly at a ritual of the Church, where we must all be humble enough to suppress our need for individual expression to instead act in concert with the entire assembly. To adhere to the "noble simplicity" of the Roman Rite means that we do not add on or multiply actions or gestures beyond what the rubrics call for.

If we are going to enter into the fullness of the meaning of **praying the Mass**, and not just praying individually at Mass, then we all need to take seriously the challenge to enter into common actions and gestures and not give in to the impulse to add our own private expressions of piety. That's a challenge that applies to all of us, ordained and laity alike!

I offer these thoughts not to present hard and fast rules and not to criticize anyone's participation at Mass, but to present a vision to get us all thinking about what it means to pray **as a body**, not as individuals who happen to be together at the same place and the same time, and what it means to **pray the Mass** rather than praying **at** Mass.

In conclusion...

Together, let's aim high in Christ.
Together, let's bring out the best in each other.
Together, let's be the best we can be in Christ.

And let's always remember: LOVE IS A
GIFT.

Sincerely,