

August 8, 2006

Liturgy Committee Bulletin Letter

Dear Parishioners,

In the years after the changes in the Mass after the Second Vatican Council one of the concerns that I heard from people was the lack of silence in the liturgy. We had changed from being extremely silent at Mass listening to the priest read all the prayers and scripture readings and an occasional hymn sung by the choir at the High Mass to praying the Mass together, everyone taking their proper part. Our part (I wasn't a priest then so I can say, "our" part) as laity was to pray meditatively and contemplatively and silently. Now, the role of the laity is to participate actively and consciously with the priest in the celebration of the Holy Eucharist which in fact does include moments of silent prayer. In the rush to learn the new prayers and new hymns and still finish in an hour the moments of silence were often lost.

Silence is essential to the prayerful celebration of the Eucharist. We need time to listen to God's Word in the depths of our hearts and ponder what it means for us. Remember how Mary "kept all these things, reflecting on them in her heart" (Luke 2:19). Listening with the heart is more than hearing someone speak. Listening with the heart is trying to hear what the other person is trying to tell you. What is God trying to tell us in the words and the experience of prayer at Mass. Where is God leading me in my thoughts and my affections? What am I learning through this experience about God's love for me and for others? There are several moments when silent prayer is appropriate at Mass. Here are the ones that come to mind:

Before Mass: After greeting fellow parishioners briefly before Mass begins take a moment of silence to reflect on why you are here-to give thanks to God for the blessings of our lives and the blessings of the week gone by.

At the Opening Prayer: After the priest says "Let Us Pray" we are invited to silently gather our personal prayers together. The old name for this prayer was the "Collect." Once we have brought all our concerns to God, then the priest "collects" our prayers together and presents them to God in the Opening Prayer.

After each Scripture Reading and after the Homily: In each scripture there is something God wants you to hear for your life. Listen to the reading and then in the moments of silence afterwards think about what God is trying to say to you through this scripture or the priest's homily.

After Receiving Holy Communion: After we have received Christ himself in Holy Communion we return to our seats singing joyfully the Communion Hymn and then in the quiet moment when the priest also sits down the entire community silently prays talking to Jesus in their hearts and praying for one another. This is a moment of unity words cannot describe and so we pray in silence.

Have a great week of summertime,

Fr. Kerry Beaulieu

Pastor