

THE MEANING OF THE MASS

Part Two: God Speaks to Us – The Liturgy of the Word

We hear God speak to us at every Mass. Our listening to God's Word – the Bible - leads us into deeper communion with Jesus in the Eucharist. Various Scripture Readings we hear aloud relate to seasons and feasts of the Church, so that over the course of three years we hear proclaimed a large part of the Old Testament and nearly the entirety of the New Testament.

First Reading

- Scripture selections taken from the Old Testament (except during Easter)
- Jesus is the interpretive key for all of Scripture; that is, the Old Testament prefigures Christ and His Church.
- We exclaim, "Thanks be to God", signaling our sincere thanks as intentional disciples.

Responsorial Psalm

- We *respond* to God's Word with even more of God's Word taken from the *Book of Psalms*, a collection of 150 hymns that capture the full range of human experience and God's graciousness to us.
- The back-and-forth movement – antiphonal - is present throughout the Bible, as our worship (again) beautifully conforms to the biblical standard.

Second Reading

- Scripture selections taken from the New Testament Epistles ("Letters"), Acts of the Apostles or the Book of Revelation.
- We hear about the saving work of Jesus for us and receive practical applications for cheerful and committed Christian living.

Gospel Reading

- We *sing* this Hebrew expression meaning, "Praise the LORD", a word found at the beginning and end of many Psalms and also is spoken by the angels in heaven to praise God for His work of salvation.
- We *stand* to welcome the Lord Jesus who is about to be proclaimed in the Gospel
- We *trace* a three-fold Sign of the Cross, asking the LORD to consecrate our thoughts (forehead), words (lips) and actions (heart).
- The Gospel recounts for us works and actions of Jesus, to make Jesus' life present and impactful in deeply personal ways.

Homily [Preaching]

- The priest or deacon explains God's Word, seeking to apply it for help in daily living.

Creed [Profession of Faith]

- We *stand* and state the standard for Christian belief as given to us by the early Church.

Prayer of the Faithful [Petitions]

- Intercessory prayers are voiced on behalf of those in special need of God's help