

First Readings

“For in the readings, as explained by the Homily, God speaks to his people, opening up to them the mystery of redemption and salvation, and offering spiritual nourishment; and Christ himself is present through his word in the midst of the faithful. By silence and by singing, the people make this divine word their own, and affirm their adherence to it by means of the Profession of Faith; finally, having been nourished by the divine word, the people pour out their petitions by means of the Universal prayer for the needs of the whole Church and for the salvation of the whole world.”

GIRM, 55

The readings from sacred scripture form the community in its weekly gathering. One of the Greatest contributions the Second Vatican Council made to Catholic worship was the revision of the Lectionary for Mass.

- One-year cycle of readings expanded to a Three- year Cycle.
- Formerly, Catholics heard 1% of the OT and 17% of the NT,
- Now, they hear 14% of the OT and 71% of the NT.

Proclaiming the scripture aloud expresses their original design. The bible was written for public proclamation, not just for private devotion.

Middle of second Century, the reading of scripture was already a fixed part of the Sunday gathering.

- “ On the day we call the day of the sun, all who dwell in the city or country gather in the same place. The memoirs of the apostles and the writings of the prophets are read, as much as time permits. When the reader has finished, he who presides over those gathered admonishes and challenges them to imitate these beautiful things.” By Justin Martyr

Today, the reader should be someone other than the priest or the deacon, but they may perform the function if necessary.

- The readings should be proclaimed from the ambo, which is reserved for the key elements of the Liturgy of the Word.

The Liturgy of the Word 2

- The Assembly, which has been standing, changes its posture and sits. They “**sit and Listen.**”

God speaks to the people in the proclamation of the Word, not in the common silent reading of the Word; and Christ speaks to the people – in the present tense – whenever the Gospel is proclaimed.

Responsorial Psalm

“After the First Reading follows the Responsorial Psalm, which is an integral part of the Liturgy of the Word and which has great liturgical and pastoral importance, since it fosters meditation on the Word of God....

It is preferable for the Responsorial Psalm to be sung, at least as far as the people’s response is concerned...”

FIRM 61,

The Psalm that follows the First Reading is “responsorial” because of its form, not because of its function.

- Designed to be sung in alternation between the psalmist and the people; thus, making it responsorial.

History

- Tertullian mentioned the singing of Psalms with readings from scripture at Christian worship.
- Augustine preached on the Psalms, elevating their status among the proclaimed readings, “The Psalm that we have just heard sung, and to which we have responded by singing, is short, and very profitable.”
- By the 8th Century, Ordo Romanus I says that after the reading the cantor ascends the ambo and sings a “response.”

The Liturgy of the Word 3

In the current rite, both the GIRM and the Order of Mass use the word “psalmist” for the one who sings the Psalm. The unique usage of the word “psalmists”, for this part of the Mass indicates a special role, as well as the significance of the Psalm.

The Psalm may be sung from any suitable place, but the ambo is recommended because its text comes from sacred scripture.

Second reading

“If there is to be a Second Reading before the Gospel, the reader proclaims it from the ambo. All listen and at the end reply to the acclamation. Then if appropriate, a few moments of silence may be observed.”

GIRM 130

Background

- Weekly proclamation of a Second Reading before the Gospel is a much appreciated contribution of the 1970 Missal.

Gospel Acclamation.

“After the reading that immediately precedes the Gospel, the Alleluia or another chant laid down by the rubrics is sung, as the liturgical time requires. An acclamation of this kind constitutes a rite or act in itself, by which the gathering of the faithful welcome and greets the Lord who is about to speak to them in the Gospel and profess their faith by means of the chant. It is sung by everybody, standing, and is led by the choir or a cantor, being retreated as the case requires. The verse, on the other hand, is sung either by the choir or by a cantor...”

GIRM 62

This acclamation announces the coming of the Gospel and accompanies the procession to the ambo. It may be omitted if it is not sung.

The Liturgy of the Word 4

The Order of Mass says the Alleluia or “another chant” follows the Second Readings. The other chant is a reference to the acclamation that replaces the Alleluia during Lent, but it also refers to the singing of the Sequence.

The Hebrew word “Alleluia” means “Praise God.”

- It appears several times in the Book of Psalms as a shout of Joy, and only once in the New Testament, in the Book of Revelation, where it serves as a refrain for a hymn sung to the Lamb, the risen Christ.

“During the singing of the Alleluia or other chant, if incense is being used, the Deacon ministers to the Priest as he puts incense into the thurible. Then, bowing profoundly before the Priest, he ask for the blessing, saying in a low voice, Your blessing, Father “

- GIRM 175

Gospel

“The reading of the Gospel constitutes the high point of the Liturgy of the Word. The Liturgy itself teaches the great reverence that is to be shown to this reading by setting it off from the other reading by setting it off from the other readings with special marks of honor, by the fact of which minister is appointed to proclaim it and by the blessing or prayer with which he prepares himself; and also by the fact that through their acclamations the faithful acknowledge and confess that Christ is present and is speaking to them and stand as they listen to the reading; and by the mere fact of the marks of reverence that are given to the Book of Gospel.”

GIRM 60

Several marks of respect are given the Gospel. A rich panoply of symbols unspools in rapid, smooth succession. The liturgy makes every effort to show how important this moment is.

- The Book of the Gospels may be carried in procession from the altar to the ambo
- Candles and incense may lead the way
- The people stand
- The Gospel Acclamation is sung
- An Ordained minister prepares himself for the proclamation
- He greets the people; they respond
- The Gospel is announced and the Sign of the Cross is made over the book, the forehead, lips, and breast
 - o The people respond, making similar gestures

The Liturgy of the Word 5

- The book may be incensed
- Finally, the Gospel is proclaimed.

Background

- The designation of a special minister for reading the Gospel goes all the way back to the Third century. Cyprian (+258)
- The use of candles and incense is in evidence by Ordo Romanus I
- The greeting of the people, the announcement of the evangelist, and the sign of the cross appeared in the 1570 Missal and are still in force today.

- At First, the Gospel was proclaimed from an ambo on the liturgical north side of the building, but in time it was read from the altar from the same book used for other prayers at the Mass. To show the distinction, the book was moved from the right to the left side of the altar.

“... Lastly, the deacon may carry the book of the Gospels to the credence table or to another appropriate and dignified place. “

- GIRM 175

That text “Praise to you, Lord Jesus Christ,” affirms the people’s belief in the presence of Jesus Christ in his proclaimed word.

“When the Sacred Scriptures are read in the Church, God himself speaks to his people and Christ, present in his own word, proclaims the Gospel.”

HOMILY

“The Homily is part of the Liturgy and is highly recommended, for it is necessary for the nurturing of the Christian Life. It should be an explanation of some aspect of the readings from Sacred Scripture or of another text from the Ordinary or the Proper of the Mass of the day and should take into account both the mystery being celebrated and the particular needs of the listeners. “

GIRM 65

Background

The Liturgy of the Word 6

- On the road to Emmaus, Jesus explained the scriptures to two disciples before breaking bread with them. (Luke 24:27)
- Paul held a discussion with the Faithful in Troas when he met with them to break bread. (Acts 20:7-12)

Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy (Second Vatican Council reset the purpose of homily)

- “By means of the homily, the mysteries of the faith and the guiding principles of the Christian life are expounded from the sacred text during the course of the liturgical year. The Homily is strongly recommended since it forms part of the Liturgy itself. In fact, at those Masses which are celebrated on Sundays and holydays of obligation, with the people assisting, it should not be omitted except for a serious reason.” CSL 52

Profession of Faith.

“The Creed is to be sung or said by the Priest together with the people on Sundays and Solemnities. It may be said also at particular celebrations of a more solemn character. If it is sung, it is intoned by the Priest or, if appropriate, by a cantor or by the choir. It is then sung either by everybody together or by the people alternating with the choir. If it is not sung, it is to be recited by everybody together or by two choirs responding one to the other.”

GIRM 68

Background

- The Creed unifies the voices of the assembly into the common faith it professes.
 - o So it is the first statement following the dismissal of catechumens, who are still preparing to profess their faith on the day of their Baptism.
- After the death of Jesus, it took the Church several centuries to formulate the Creed it now professes
 - o Middle of the Second century, a catechetical device for teaching the faith appears in the Epistula Apostolorum (letter of the Apostles)
 - o A century later, the Apostolic Tradition describes the initiation practices of the early Church.
- Apostles’ Creed
- Nicene Creed

The Liturgy of the Word 7

- The need became more critical in the fourth century, when heretical movements tore at the fabric of the Church, and people sought clarity for their faith.
- The Councils of Nicaea (325) and Constantinople (381) took up the task and burnished the version now known as the Niceno-Constantinopolitan Creed, or Nicene Creed.
- 589 Council of Toledo
 - Added the Latin word filioque to express the Western Church' belief that the Holy Spirit proceeds not only from the Father but also from the Son.
 - Required all churches in its region to profess the Creed together in its region to profess the Creed together before the Lord's prayer on Sundays.
- Congregations often recite the Creed without intense thought, but week by week, generation after generation, these words unite the faith of the Church around the world and across the ages. It gives a weekly assent to the core of Christian belief.
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Prayer of the Faithful

"In the Universal Prayer or prayer of the Faithful, the people respond in some sense to the Word of God which they have received in faith and, exercising the office of their baptismal Priesthood, offer prayers to God for the salvation of all. It is desirable that there usually be such a form of prayer in Masses celebrated with the people, so that petitions may be offered for holy Church, for those who govern with authority over us, for those weighed down by various needs, for all humanity, and for the salvation of the whole world.

The series of intentions is usually to be:

For the needs of the Church

For public authorities and the salvation of the whole world.

For those burdened by any kind of difficulty

For the local community"

The Liturgy of the Word⁸

Background

- All the faithful make their petitions known to God. In doing so, they exercise their baptismal ministry as the priestly people.
- Three Names
 - Universal prayer
 - It is universal because the community prays for the needs of all the world, not just local ones
 - Prayer of the Faithful
 - It is the prayer “of the faithful,” because catechumens have been dismissed, and the faithful are exercising their priestly ministry.
 - Bidding Prayer
 - They are “bidding” because they take the form of a litany, and the one announcing the intentions bids the people to pray for them.
- The practice of praying for specific groups is recommended in the First letter to Timothy.
- 2nd Century Justin the Martyr
 - “then we all rise together and offer prayers for ourselves... and for all others, wherever they may be, so that we may be found righteous by our life and actions, and faithful to the commandments, so as to obtain eternal salvation.”
- 4th Century Apostolic Constitutions, where a long list of petitions is preserved.
- 5th century Pope Gelasius is credited as the source of this litany in the liturgy.
- 10th Century, during a service that included prayers for various needs, instruction, announcements, and promulgation of commands.
- 1570 Missal shows only a trace of these prayers

Today, the Prayer of the Faithful is integral to every celebration of the Mass.

- There are guidelines for its content, but its design expects the local community to formulate the petitions for which it will pray.
- Deacon
 - Assigning the listing of petitions goes back to the 4th century Apostolic constitutions.
 - It also underscores his role as the one responsible for charity in the community, the one who would be most aware of local needs.
- Another minister may read the petitions, because they are part of the Liturgy of the Word and grow out from the scriptures, the petitions may be led from the ambo.