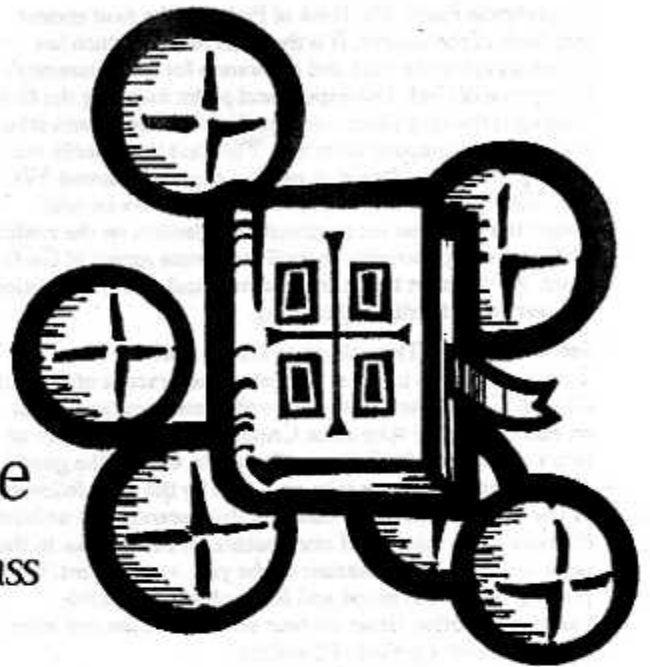


Give Thanks and Praise

A Popular Explanation of the Mass



Part 3

The Liturgy of the Word (a)

God wants to speak to us. He wants to speak to us about his love for us, a love that began before we were born, before the first human walked this earth.

God wants to speak to us about the goodness of all creation, about the goodness of this earth, of this world. He desires to speak about the incredible goodness of the men and women who have lived, who inhabit this place now, and who are yet to be born.

God wants to speak to us about life that is yet to come; about life in the yet to be fulfilled Reign and Kingdom of God; about the incredible, incomprehensible, wonderful new life in heaven; about a *new life* beyond the one we now know.

God wants to speak to us about what it means to be God. And we are often surprised, aren't we? Surprised at a God who is not only strong and sure and protecting, but also gentle and merciful and affectionate. We are surprised at a God who often seems slow to hear and slower to answer. And we are surprised at whom God chooses, whom he calls. Not only the distinguished and the worthy: Abraham, David, Isaiah, and Mary. But also the weak and the unsure: Jeremiah, Peter, the poor, the lame, the widow, the outcast, the unwanted. The ones we least expect, including ourselves.

Nature of the Liturgy of the Word: Simply stated, the Liturgy of the Word is the Church's special moment to hear God speaking through the scriptures. From its earliest days the Christian community has always deemed it essential that its members be nourished at both the table of the word and at the table of the eucharist.

Our Task: Our task is to listen to God speaking. Our task is to attend to the word and to be attentive to it. Our task is to open

our whole being to the God who speaks. We know and believe that God is always present with us. Yet because we cannot always reach out with our hands and touch God we often find it very hard to *listen*. The structure of the Liturgy of the Word provides us with a pattern for truly listening and responding to the God who speaks. In reading, in song, and in silence we attend to the spoken word of the Lord.

Structure of the Liturgy of the Word: The pattern for the liturgy of the word is quite simple. Its general rhythm is one of proclamation and response.

Proclamation	Response
First Reading	Responsorial Psalm
Second Reading Gospel (preceded by its Acclamation)	Profession of Faith General Intercessions
Homily	

First Reading: This selection is usually taken from the Hebrew scriptures (during the Easter season it comes from the Acts of the Apostles). The presence of the Old Testament reading manifests the Church's firm conviction that all scripture is the word of God. There is a continuity between the two Testaments: both lead us to Jesus Christ. As St. Augustine stated it: "In the Old Testament the New is hidden, in the New Testament the Old appears." Furthermore, the story of the people of old is also our story. It is part of our heritage. On Sundays the selection usually relates to the Gospel reading by reasons of topic, mood, or focus.

