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Spiritual

Participation in the Mystery of Christ

by Reverend Louis J. Cameli, STD

Catechists, parents, and all who want to communicate to others the Catholic faith and tradition of the liturgy and the sacraments understand instinctively that sharing information is not enough. We know that we must draw life from the liturgy and sacraments of the Church in such a way that others, too, can grasp the transforming power of the Church's sacramental life. In other words, we must be immersed in a liturgical and sacramental spirituality that shapes their lives decisively.

As noble and praiseworthy as these thoughts sound, a very practical issue remains. Where can we begin to reflect and deepen a liturgical and sacramental spirituality? How do we make explicit experiences that may be very deeply rooted within us but have not been reflected upon explicitly?

A good starting point might be St. Paul's words in his letter to the Romans: *I appeal to you, therefore, brothers and sisters, by the mercies of God, to present your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable to God, which is your spiritual worship* (Romans 12:1). Paul's words express the "end product" of people who have engaged in

the worship that is led by Jesus and prompted by the Spirit. These are people who have linked themselves sacramentally with Jesus. They have come to know the saving power of his death and Resurrection. They have understood that the death and Resurrection of Jesus are not simply events locked in a past moment in history but historical moments whose saving power is accessible to all people in all places and in every time.

In this spirit and understanding, Paul writes in the same letter of the experience of Baptism: *Do you not know that all of us who have been baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into his death? Therefore we have been buried with him by baptism into death, so that, just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, so we too might walk in newness of life* (Romans 6:3-4). These words of Paul further illuminate our

*The saving power
of the
Paschal mystery
is accessible to
all of us today.*

Reflection

understanding of worship in Spirit and in truth through the sacraments of the Church. Not only does our sacramental worship help us transcend the limits of time and space and enable us to enter and participate in the mystery of Christ, this sacramental worship transforms us, changes us, “. . . so that we too might walk in newness of life.” True worship and real participation in the sacraments cannot leave us unchanged. We change and grow more deeply into conformity with the Christ whose holy mysteries we celebrate.

Notice, too, that although so much of the language is spiritual (mystery of Christ, spiritual worship), it takes place in a physical world, in tangible signs and expressions of faith, and in our very bodies. The origin of the mystery is the Incarnate Word of God, the only Son of God who took on flesh and in his body conquered sin and death. The signs and symbols of the sacraments in their physical dimensions touch our bodily existence and become vehicles that usher us into spiritual realms and transformation.

This is the heart of the spirituality of liturgy and sacraments. In physical signs and symbols we find the communication of grace that transforms us and brings us into God's very own life. Our lively sense of this reality and this spirituality will shape in ever more effective ways our communication of the liturgical and sacramental life to those entrusted to our care.

For Reflection

- Describe ways in which you have been transformed through your participation in the sacraments.
- How would you describe to a non-Catholic the importance of the Church's worship and sacramental life?

Louis J. Cameli is a priest of the Archdiocese of Chicago and pastor of Divine Savior Parish in Norridge, Illinois. He completed his theological studies at the Gregorian University in Rome and obtained a doctorate in theology with a specialization in spirituality. He is the former director of ongoing formation of priests in the Archdiocese of Chicago and director of the Cardinal Stritch Retreat House, Mundelein, Illinois. In February, 2002, he received the Pope John XXIII Award from the National Organization for the Continuing Education of Roman Catholic Clergy (NOCERCC) for his contributions to the continuing education and ongoing formation of priests. He has authored numerous books on spirituality and also served as a writer and theological consultant for RCL Benziger's *Faith First* and *Faith First Legacy Edition* K-8 curriculum.

Signs of Christ's Presence

Lord Jesus Christ,
you have **revealed** to us
the **mystery** of your Father
through your life and **saving work**.

Spirit of Christ, you **live today**
through the mysteries
of the Church's **sacramental life**.

Body of Christ,
open us to your whole Body, the People of God.
Blood of Christ, cleanse us from all sin and wrongdoing.

Your **presence** in the Eucharist
is a sign to us of your **covenant love**.
May the **Eucharist** inspire us to become signs
of your **presence** in the world as we do your will and
help your **kingdom** come throughout the earth.

Amen.

Overview: Liturgy and Sacraments

Catholics are a sacramental people. Our faith is rooted in the belief that God is present among us, that God took on flesh and walked among us in the person of Jesus Christ, that Jesus' death and Resurrection were saving for us all, and that the Spirit of God was sent by Jesus to guide and animate us as Church. When we gather to worship, we ritualize our belief in these mysteries and celebrate the ways in which we find them still deeply present in our lives. In this module you will explore the meaning of liturgy and sacrament and gain insight into why the sacramental life of the faith community is so central to our Catholic identity.

You will engage in a process of faith reflection using three components: a DVD, this companion booklet, and a CD-ROM. See page 5 for an explanation of how these components complement one another. You began the process on pages 6 and 7 with a reflection on our participation in the mystery of Christ through the sacraments. On the next two pages you will engage in an opening activity that will invite you to reflect on family rituals in preparation for your study of Catholic ritual and liturgy.

The rest of the booklet is divided into four segments that parallel the divisions of the DVD. The topics are:

1. What Is Liturgy?

Part 1: Ritual and Liturgy

Part 2: Liturgy and the Paschal Mystery

2. Liturgy and Christian Identity

Part 1: Music and Sacred Space

Part 2: Symbols in Liturgy

3. Sacraments of Initiation

Part 1: The Sacramental Principle

Part 2: Baptism, Confirmation, and Eucharist

4. Sacraments of Healing and Service

Part 1: Sacraments of Healing

Part 2: Sacraments at the Service of Communion

There is an enrichment article at the end of each segment process that extends learning by exploring a topic related to the segment theme.

This module is only a brief introduction to the Church's liturgy and sacramental life. As you continue to read, study, reflect, and attend classes and workshops, you will grow in knowledge and insight. Both adult and catechist formation requires the mutual support of other learners. Try to participate in the learning process for this module in a group setting. If circumstances require that you work independently, find at least one other person with whom you can share your reflections.

Linda Gaupin is a Sister of Divine Providence from Allison Park, Pennsylvania. She has served as chairperson of the Theology Department, La Roche College, Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, Director of Worship, Diocese of Wilmington, Delaware, Diocesan Director of Religious Education in Orlando, Florida, and Associate Director of the Secretariat for the Liturgy, USCCB in Washington, DC. Linda is both author and lecturer on topics pertaining to liturgy and liturgical and sacramental catechesis. She holds a PhD from Catholic University of America, Washington, DC.

Liturgy and Christian Identity

The *Catechism of the Catholic Church* tells us that “The liturgy of the Church presupposes, integrates, and sanctifies elements from creation and human culture, conferring on them the dignity of signs of grace of the new creation in Jesus Christ” (CCC 1149). Liturgical celebrations are a weaving together of signs and symbols drawn from our human experience, words and actions, singing and music, and sacred images. An artful blending of these elements produces a worship experience that can evoke for us the mystery of God. The way we structure our worship space helps us to connect what we live and believe with the saving activity of God in Christ. Integrating cultural elements into liturgy helps the community to understand the meaning of the Christian mystery. Indeed, the worshiping community itself is a symbol of the relationship of God and God’s people.

Goal

To explore how worship expresses our identity as a faith community

Learning Objectives

- To explain the significance of liturgical space and music in liturgy
- To identify ways that cultural expression can be incorporated into liturgy
- To describe the role of the assembly in liturgical celebration

Exercise

Take a few moments to reflect on the following question. Then discuss your thoughts with another person or with your group.

In what ways has music enhanced your celebration of liturgy?

Prayer

Gracious God, you have created us with the ability to look beneath the surface of things and to see evidence of your presence in our midst. Grant me a spirit of openness to all the ways you make yourself known to me, especially through the celebration of the Eucharist. Give me a spirit of gratitude for the gift of your Son Jesus Christ, who most perfectly reveals you to us all. I offer this prayer in his name. Amen.

**Because
the assembly
gathers in the
presence of God
to celebrate his
saving deeds,
liturgy's climate
is one of awe,
mystery,
wonder,
reverence,
thanksgiving,
and praise.**

*Environment and Art
in Catholic Worship 34*

Watch Segment 2,
Part 1 of the DVD
or CD-ROM now.

Looking Ahead

Part 1: Music and Sacred Space

The first part of this segment explores the elements of space, music and symbols in the celebration of liturgy. Below you will find an outline of the principal content of the DVD that accompanies part 1 of this segment. You may wish to refer to this outline as you watch the DVD. Below the outline, there is space for you to jot down your comments and questions that occur to you during and after the viewing.

Video Outline

- A description of the role of liturgical space as a symbol of our relationship to God in Christ
- Illustrations of the effective use of music in liturgy
- Theological and pastoral reflections on the power of good music in liturgy

Comments and Questions

Use the space below to list comments, questions, feelings, or ideas that occur to you as you view the video.

A large sheet of lined paper with a vertical margin line on the left side, intended for writing comments and questions.

Looking Back

Part 1: Music and Sacred Space

Reflect silently on one or more of the questions below and then jot down your response(s). Then share your thoughts with another person or with a group.

1. What significance is there to the placement in liturgical space of each of the following elements?

Elements of Liturgical Space	Significance
Baptismal font or pool	
Seating for the assembly	
Ambo and altar	

2. If you could alter the design of the worship space in your parish, what changes would you make? How would these changes lead to more effective liturgical celebration?

3. Michael Joncas speaks on the video of four ways that music can enhance liturgical celebration. Select one or more of these functions of music from the list below and describe ways in which it has contributed to an effective celebration for you.

Proclamation of the Gospel

Reinforcing the Gospel message

Fellowship/community

Call to service

Remember . . .

Liturgical space helps express the relationship of the assembly to one another and to God.

Music is an important part of worship.

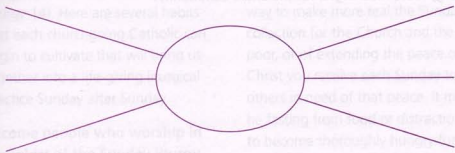
Music proclaims, catechizes, builds fellowship and leads to service.

Looking Back

Part 2: Symbols in Liturgy

Reflect silently on one or more of the questions below and then jot down your response(s). Then share your thoughts with another person or with a group.

1. Water, light, fire, and oil are universal symbols with many layers of meaning. Choose one of these symbols and write it in the center of the word map below. Around the name of the symbol, describe different meanings that this symbol can have in the Christian liturgy.



2. Recall a cultural symbol used in the Native American liturgy in the video. Describe ways in which that symbol might enhance the worship experience for the Native American community.

3. The assembly and the actions it performs at liturgy express the relationship between God and God's people. In what ways can an understanding of this principle by the people enhance the celebration of liturgy?

Remember . . .

The Church invites cultural expression within liturgy.

•
All the signs and symbolic actions of our liturgy speak of the mystery of God's saving presence.

•
Liturgical space, music, and cultural symbols express our identity as Christians.

The Role of the Assembly

by Cardinal Roger M. Mahony

The Second Vatican Council called for the “full, conscious, and active participation by all the faithful” at the liturgy (*Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy* 14). Here are several habits that each churchgoing Catholic can begin to cultivate that will bring us together into a life-giving liturgical practice Sunday after Sunday.

Become people who worship in the midst of the Sunday liturgy.

Prepare by using the Sunday Gospel and New Testament letter in your daily reading. Bring to the prayer of intercession on Sunday all that you pray for; take from it persons to be remembered daily by you. Hear the daily news of your community and the world as a Christian called to lift up the world’s needs in prayer. Mark with prayer your morning rising and your evening going to bed: the Lord’s Prayer certainly, but also some song or psalm from the Sunday liturgy.

Become people who prepare for Sunday Liturgy and for whom Sunday Liturgy is preparation for the week. Seek little ways that can help make the Lord’s Day a day when liturgy has room. Find some habit for

Sunday morning that helps you anticipate joining the community at liturgy and stretch toward the Reign of God we glimpse at Mass. It might be a way to make more real the Sunday collection for the Church and the poor, or of extending the peace of Christ you receive each Sunday to others in need of that peace. It might be fasting from food or distractions to become thoroughly hungry for God’s Word and the Eucharistic banquet. It might be to form the habit of blessing your children, a practice that is so much to be praised in Hispanic families.

At the liturgy, be the Church.

Know the awesome responsibility you share for making this liturgy! Do not hide; do your private praying in the other hours of the week. Welcome one another, be at peace with one another. Sit together. Sing songs from your heart. Do not be afraid to show, in your eager attention, that you are hungry for God’s Word when the readers read; hungry for Christ’s Body and Blood when you come forward in procession to receive Holy Communion. Give thanks and praise

Cardinal Roger M. Mahony a native of Los Angeles, was named the Cardinal Archbishop of Los Angeles in 1991. He was ordained a priest in the diocese of Fresno, California in 1962, and appointed Auxiliary to the Bishop of Fresno in 1975. He served as Bishop of Stockton, California from 1980 to 1985, when he was appointed Archbishop of Los Angeles.

Cardinal Mahony’s many committee memberships for the National Conference of Catholic Bishops have included the areas of liturgy, pro-life activities, sexual abuse, migration and refugees, HIV/AIDS, and communications. He has served as a member of the Catholic Common Ground Initiative and of the advisory board for the Bernardin Center for Theology and Ministry. Cardinal Mahony has a long history of leadership in issues related to the social teachings of the Church.

Know the awesome responsibility you share for making this liturgy!

to God by your great attention in the Eucharistic Prayer. Keep your eyes open to one another and do everything you can to build up the Church, the Body of Christ. If the presider or homilist needs help, do not criticize—help.

Apart from the liturgy, be the Church.

Remember we are always the Body of Christ in communion with one another. In the simplest deeds of daily life, at work or at home, be conscious of this life we share in Christ. Look at the liturgy as a remote preparation for your week. Listening to God's Word on Sunday is preparation for listening for God's Word in

our lives all week. The thanks we proclaim at the Eucharistic Prayer is a preparation for thanks we offer every day. The common table of Holy Communion is a preparation for looking at the whole world.

Give thanks always. Pray grace at meals, even when you are alone. Sing when you are with others at table. Permeate your morning prayer and night prayer with praise and thanks to God. Enrich it with verses of psalms and prayers from the tradition. Cultivate moments of contemplation even during the busiest day, when gratitude can flow from the goodness of a person, any element of creation, or any good work of human making.

For Reflection

What good habit will you try to form to make your participation at Sunday Eucharist more complete?