



Archdiocese of New York + 2011

ACCLAMATIONS FROM THE LITURGY OF THE WORD

The Liturgy of the Word in the Mass: The *Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy* of the Second Vatican Council stressed the importance of Sacred Scripture in the celebration of the liturgy, strongly endorsing the promotion of a warm and living love for Scripture. The reforms made to the readings following the Council expanded the number of readings from Scripture through the use of a three year cycle for Sunday readings and a two-year cycle for Weekday readings. As a result, almost all of the New Testament and the Old Testament is read in the course of this cycle. Priests are encouraged to explain the Scripture readings in their homilies and the people now participate in the Liturgy of the Word through responses and acclamations. The Church makes it clear that the Liturgy of the Word plays an essential role in the Mass and the third *General Instruction of the Roman Missal* stresses that it is not subordinate to the Liturgy of the Eucharist, but rather that the Liturgy of the Word and the Liturgy of the Eucharist are so closely interconnected that they form one single act of worship.

God speaks to his people and Christ proclaims the Gospel: The Church teaches that when the Scriptures are read at Mass, it is God who is proclaiming the sacred Word, opening up the mystery of redemption and salvation, and offering spiritual nourishment, while Christ himself is present in the midst of the faithful proclaiming his Gospel. It is an act of faith to believe that God is speaking directly to us through the lector who reads the pre-Gospel readings, and that when the deacon or priest proclaims the Gospel it is Christ who speaks to us. But is exactly that which we are called to believe, and since this is our belief, our participation in the Liturgy of the Word is vitally important, a matter of responding to God himself.

Receiving the Word of God: How are we to receive the Word of God proclaimed to us at Mass? The Church tells us that *all must listen with reverence to the readings from God's Word.* (GIRM n. 29, emphasis added) While those with hearing impairments may find it necessary to read along in a missal or missalette, those of us who can hear are

asked to **listen hard.** Pope John Paul II in his encyclical on the Sunday emphasized the value of preparing for the Sunday liturgy ahead of time, reflecting beforehand on the word of God that will be proclaimed so that *we may be penetrated more powerfully by it.* (n. 40) This preparation, as well as our attentive listening and our reflection in periods of silence during Mass are intended to allow the Holy Spirit to speak to each of us.

Responding to the Word of God: The Liturgy of the Word is a dialogue in which God speaks to his people and we respond. In addition to attentive listening, we are called to make responses rooted in our faith. These responses have not changed in the new translation. Our *Thanks be to God!* after the first and second readings voices our gratitude to God for his life-giving word, and in the Responsorial Psalm we are given the opportunity to meditate on that word and to respond to it in the repeated refrain.

The Gospel, the High Point of the Liturgy of the Word: Although all Scripture readings are inspired by the Holy Spirit, the Church gives special reverence to the Gospel readings, the words and deeds of Christ himself. The rituals surrounding the proclamation of the Gospel make this very clear: from the beautifully designed Gospel Book carried in the Entrance Procession and placed on the altar until the time of the Gospel reading, to the sung acclamations, incense and lighted candles which accompany the procession with the Gospel Book as it is brought from the altar to the ambo, to the reading of the Gospel by an ordained minister, to the kissing of the Gospel Book at the conclusion of the reading, all is intended to highlight the significance of the Gospel to the Christian Community gathered for the celebration of Mass. And we, as members of that Community are given the opportunity to celebrate the Gospel through our responses and our participation in the song of the Gospel Procession, the Alleluia which expresses our joyful anticipation of the Good News to be proclaimed to us.