

## **A Walk Through the Mass: A Step-by-Step Explanation**

### **Week Two: The Liturgy of the Word**

#### **Storytelling (Liturgy of the Word)**

When we gather at a friend's home for a meal, we almost always begin with conversation, telling our stories. At Mass, after the gathering rites, we sit down and listen as readings from the Word of God are proclaimed. They are the stories of God's people.

**Three readings and a psalm.** On Sundays, there are three readings from the Bible. The first reading will be from the Old Testament (except during the Easter season). We recall the origins of the covenants God made with our ancestors in faith. The first reading often relates to the Gospel selection of the day and will give background and an insight into the meaning of what Jesus will do in the Gospel. Then we will sing or recite a psalm—a song from God's own inspired hymnal, the Book of Psalms. The second reading will usually be from one of the letters of Paul or another apostolic writing. The third reading will be taken from one of the four Gospels.

**Standing for the Gospel.** Because of the unique presence of Christ in the proclamation of the Gospel, it has long been the custom to stand in attentive reverence to hear these words. We believe that Christ "is present in his word, since it is He himself who speaks when the holy Scriptures are read in the church" (Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy, #7). The priest will again greet us with "The Lord be with you." He then introduces the Gospel reading while marking a small cross on his forehead, lips and heart with his thumb while praying silently that God cleans his mind and his heart so that his lips may worthily proclaim the Gospel. In many places, the congregation performs this ritual action along with the priest. The Gospel reading concludes with the ritual formula "The Gospel of the Lord" and we respond, "Praise to you, Lord Jesus Christ," again proclaiming our faith in the presence of Christ in the Word.

**Homily.** Then we sit for the homily. A homily is more than just a sermon or a talk about how we are to live or what we are to believe. Given by one who is ordained, the homily is an act of worship rooted in the texts of the Mass and Scripture, especially the readings which have just been proclaimed. *The homily takes that word and brings it into our life today.*

**Creed.** On Sundays we stand and together recite the Nicene or Apostles' Creed. The recitation of the creed is both a series of core truths we believe as Catholics, and a statement of our faith in the Word we have heard proclaimed in the Scripture and the homily.

"The profession of faith links the Liturgies of the Word and Eucharist as the congregation recalls the mysteries of faith which will again be proclaimed in the Eucharistic Prayer. The people accept God's Word before they move on to the celebration of the Eucharist, which itself is a profession of faith" (Mysteries of Faith, FDLC, p. 48).

**Universal Prayer.** The Liturgy of the Word comes to an end with the Universal Prayer. Responding to the Word of God, we offer prayers for the needs and the salvation of all the world. The petitions usually fall into four categories: the Church, nations and their leaders, people in special need, and the local needs of our parish.