



ST. MARY
Catholic Church

Living Worship: Living Worship:

Developing a Strong Liturgical Spirituality: Part 2



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July 29, 2007

What are you thankful for? Take a minute and think about it. How did you answer?

Many might answer with “friends” or “family.” Others might respond with “love” or “faith.” Others still might respond with “the means to live comfortably” or “the blessing of having a job that I look forward to doing every day” (that would be one of my answers).

Yet most everyone is thankful for the good things they have. But how many of us are thankful for the things that we *don't* have? Most everyone is thankful for the people with whom they share their lives. But how many of us want to say “Thanks!” when our relationship with a friend is shattered by someone or something? How many of would say, “Why, God?” instead of “Thank you, God!” when someone dies? I know that I have asked “Why?” many times, even though I know that as Christians we are called to give thanks for everything that comes our way.

What? We're called to give thanks for *everything*?

Think again of Nathan Mitchell's image of a coin. On one side of the coin is Worship; on the other is Christian Life. The coin itself represents *eucharistia*, or “thanksgiving.” From this image, we concluded at the end of the previous issue that living a Liturgical Spirituality—fully living the Christian Life side of the coin—means living a life of *constant* thanksgiving.

Our call to constant thanksgiving, to living a Liturgical Spirituality, is deeply rooted in the liturgy. Every Mass we celebrate commemorates the Paschal Mystery, the passion, death, and resurrection of Christ for us. Every liturgy gives thanks for God's saving work in our lives and calls us to carry that spirit of thanksgiving into the world. Now, some might say, “I know that Jesus suffered, died, and rose from the dead to free us from sin. But those things happened a long time ago. How do they apply to *my life* today?”

Think for a moment of the last events in Christ's life. On Holy Thursday, Jesus shared a meal with his friends. In service, he washed their feet. In worry, he prayed, “Take this cup away from me.”¹ On Good Friday, he suffered physical torment, beaten and crucified. He suffered emotional turmoil and even called out, “My God, why have you forsaken me?”² His disciples watched as the man who had shown such love in the breaking of the bread died a criminal's death. Then, miraculously, Christ rose from the dead in glory and returned to his disciples.

Haven't we had similar experiences? We may not have been beaten and crucified, but haven't we or those around us endured the physical pain of illness or injury? Haven't we shared times of

¹ Mk. 14:26

² Mk. 15:24

fellowship and love with others? Haven't we experienced the pain of broken relationships, of rejection, and of humiliation? Haven't we had moments of resurrection, when we've risen above something that weighed us down? The events of the liturgy are not far-removed from our day-to-day experience. Rather, they are perfectly in step with the experiences of our daily lives.

Nathan Mitchell writes, "The liturgy which God celebrated in the cross of Christ was not one that took place in a secret corner of the universe, but in the rough-and-tumble textures of human history."³ Likewise, Karl Rahner states, "The world and its history are the terrible and sublime liturgy, breathing of death and sacrifice, which God celebrates and causes to be celebrated in and through human history in its freedom."⁴ Like the events that our liturgies commemorate, our lives are full of Holy Thursdays, Good Fridays, and Easter Sundays, of times of joy and pain, of moments of crucifixion and resurrection. In the liturgy, we give thanks not only for the resurrection but for the pain and suffering, as well. For without death, there can be no resurrection.

Simply put, the world is a liturgy, and we live it every day. As we say each week, "It is right to give God thanks and praise." **Let us pray that we may answer our call to live a Liturgical Spirituality, giving thanks for all the events of our lives.**

In the issues to come, we'll conclude our discussion of Liturgical Spirituality and continue to deepen the connections between liturgy, life, and our call to thanksgiving.

Paul J. Schutz
Director of Worship

P.S. If you've missed an issue of Living Worship, they are all available on the Worship page at our website, <http://www.stmaryevansville.org>.

³ Mitchell, Nathan. "The Spirituality of Christian Worship." *Spirituality Today*. March 1982: 5-17.

⁴ Rahner, Karl. "Considerations on the Active Role of the Person in the Sacramental Event." *Theological Investigations*. 1976: 169-70.