

Christ is Risen! Truly He is Risen!



A blessed and happy Easter to all. Today, we will look at the Liturgy of the Word, and a very special addition that we only get a few times per year, including today! If you have missed any of these articles, you can catch up with them via our bulletin archive on our website, or you can come see me after Mass.

The Liturgy of the Word begins with the First (Old Testament) Reading. The reading is prescribed by the Church and is different from Mass to Mass - making it a Proper. We almost always hear the First Reading spoken but, as you have probably surmised, it can be sung. Like the other parts of the Mass, there are chant tones for proclaiming the readings and they are used to add more solemnity to the character of a Mass. If you have been to the Easter Resurrection Mass (usually 5 am) or the Christmas Midnight Mass, you may have heard the chanted readings. It is truly a powerful experience.

After a period of silence – in which we are meant to reflect upon the reading - the Responsorial Psalm is sung. Its text is taken from the Book of Psalms and it is sung with a repeated refrain. This is an ancient practice of the faith and Jesus Himself would have experienced this style of singing in temple worship. Following the Psalm is the Second Reading.

All the same notes apply to it as do to the First Reading, except that the text is drawn from the New Testament. And now, for the special addition. Today we have a Sequence after the Second Reading. A sequence is essentially a poetic expression or story about the theme of the Mass (a very condensed explanation). The sequence originally was an extension of the Gospel Acclamation and was used frequently at Mass. The Council of Trent pared these down to four (a fifth was later added) and today only three remain; Easter, Pentecost, and the Feast of Corpus Christi. Nowadays, the General Instruction of the Roman Missal also reorders the sequence to before the Gospel Acclamation.

The sequences expound on our understanding and worship of the Lord in a way that supplements the readings. I encourage you to look up the text of the sequence and reflect on it this week (In fact, the Church encourages the sequence to be said through the entire Octave of Easter!). It has beautiful and profound imagery that I think you will find spiritually compelling.

St. Cecilia, St. Elizabeth of the Trinity...Pray for us!

--Mark Wozniczka, Music Director (mwozniczka@archchicago.org)

