



## LITURGICAL PROCESSIONS

In recent weeks I have written about various subjects relating to the Mass, such as the prescribed periods of silence, postures and gestures that we participate in, and the all important need for full, conscious and active participation throughout.

Today I would like to focus on processions. When you see this word it probably leads you to think about some sort of movement and going somewhere. A procession can be looked at as a sort of journey, whether it be long or short, it travels from point A to point B.

At Mass, there are quite a few processions that take place. In a manner of thinking we can say that the real first procession at Mass is the procession *to* Mass. Each of us in our own way gets to church in some way. Each of us travels from where we stay (point A) to the church (point B). Because all the processions that take place during Mass have spiritual significance, so should this preliminary procession. While we are still at home, we should be readying ourselves for where we are going and what we are going to do and Who we are going to receive. Perhaps we might read the scripture passages for the day or sit in silent reflection. Keep in mind, we are also getting ready through the Eucharistic fast we partake in prior to receiving Communion.

Within the Mass, there is the Entrance Procession. This is special and so it is led by the crucifix, candles, and sometimes incense. We should be already gathered to witness this procession in which the Word of God is carried in the Book of the Gospels and the priest, who represents Christ, enter.

Later there is the Gospel Procession. Again, because of its significance, it is lead by candles. The deacon or priest carry the Book of the Gospels to the ambo to proclaim the Word of the Lord.

The Offertory Procession takes place when a few members of the assembly, representing everyone present, bring up the gifts of bread and wine. Our sacrificial monetary offerings are also brought to the sanctuary at this time. If an usher ever approaches you to ask you to take part in this procession please feel honored and answer in the affirmative because you are being given the chance to represent everyone in attendance.

We all process forward when it comes time to receive our Lord in Holy Communion. As far as we are individually concerned, this is probably the most important procession because of where we are going and Who we are going to receive. We are going to the altar of the Lord and we are going to receive the actual Body of Christ.

The final procession takes the priest and other ministers out of the assembly. Note that the Book of the Gospels is not processed out like it was processed in. Instead, we take the Gospel with us when we leave the church. Recall that the Final Dismissal impels us to go out and live what we have learned and heard at Mass. That is our mission.

There are many other religious processions that we take part in. On the Feast of Corpus Christi we process through the neighbor with the Body of Christ. The devotion of Stations of the Cross can be done in a processional way, reminiscent of Jesus' final journey to Calvary. On Palm Sunday we can have processions with the blessed palms, again remembering Jesus' entrance into Jerusalem on the first Palm Sunday. On Holy Thursday there is a solemn procession throughout the church taking the Blessed Sacrament to the Altar of Repose. And we cannot forget the funeral procession when our remains are taken to their final resting place.

Religious processions date all the way back to the Old Testament when the Ark of the Covenant was processed among the people.

Keep in mind that when we are participating in or witnessing any of these liturgical processions, we should be reminded that our entire life itself can be considered a procession or a journey or a pilgrimage toward eternal life in heaven.

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