



NATIONAL  
**Eucharistic  
Revival**

**Step-by-Step Walk Through the Mass  
Do This in Remembrance of Me, Part 18:  
Response After Readings  
By FR. LUKE SPANNAGEL**



**“The Word of the Lord.”**

**“Thanks be to God!”**

After the First and Second Readings at Mass, we have this familiar statement and response from the congregation. As the Diocese of Peoria’s *A Study of the Mass* teaches, “At the end of the reading, the lector announces, ‘the Word of the Lord,’ which is a testament of our faith in the inspired Word of God in Sacred Scripture. We readily show our gratitude and respond, ‘Thanks be to God!’ We are thankful that God has revealed himself to us and that He continues to speak to us” (p. 7).

### **God Speaks to Us**

Far more than just being “standard operating procedure,” these little dialogues are really powerful affirmations of what is happening during the Liturgy of the Word. While the lector proclaims God’s Word, we listen to what God wants to teach us that particular day. Even if we are generally attentive to the readings, we can easily get distracted. Perhaps we notice someone sitting nearby and think of a question we wanted to ask him or her. Sometimes, a word in the reading reminds us of another thought. Maybe our stomach growls and we start thinking about what our next meal might be. In any event, at the end of the reading, the lector helps to get us back on track if we’ve wandered astray. The lector says, “The Word of the Lord,” as if to say, “In case you forgot or didn’t notice, the Lord God of heaven and earth was just speaking to you.” It really is amazing to stop and think about: God is speaking to us, his people, through the readings at Mass!

Our response, “Thanks be to God,” acknowledges that God is truly speaking to his people through the Bible reading we just heard and that we recognize we are blessed to hear those words! Being in the habit of turning to God in thankfulness can be so helpful in our daily living as well. In the midst of our lives, we easily get our hearts turned inward, such as when we are thinking about what makes us happy or what we would enjoy for dinner. In more serious situations, when we fall into sin, we are turned inward in a way that keeps our vision away from God and others. When this happens, we can find ourselves falling into selfishness and self-seeking behavior. We can also miss opportunities for charity because we do not recognize the good in the people around us.

### **Practicing Thankfulness**

In these latter situations, the grace of the sacraments helps strengthen us. Thankfulness is also a great remedy that helps turn our hearts as we recognize blessings that have come from God and others. Being thankful can give us a reset and help us once again to see and appreciate the gifts God has given us and the good that we can see in one another. We glimpse the wisdom behind our response to the readings at Mass. Being in the habit of regularly thanking God helps keep our hearts healthy and on track.

Not only does this dialogue help us acknowledge God and thank him for the Scriptures, but it can also help us stay in tune with what we are doing at Mass. As you may know, the word Eucharist itself means “thanksgiving.” In the Mass, we join with Christ in the perfect sacrifice of praise to God the Father. As God’s people, we are also joined together in thankful praise, recognizing the love of Christ and our invitation to share in that love. Very fittingly, after the Second Reading and response, we will praise God together in preparation for the Gospel as we sing the Alleluia!