

HAVE YOU NOTICED CHANGES AT MASS?

Recently a few things at Mass have changed here at St. Elizabeth. Have you noticed?

- One audible change has been the ringing of a single bell at the beginning of Mass. This was instituted as a signal to the musician and the people that the Mass is about to begin. This carries over from the same practice at weekday Masses where no musician is present, and the priest rings bells as a signal that Mass is about to begin and for the people to stand.

- You may have also noticed a book being carried in the Entrance Procession and being placed on the altar before the ministers enter the sanctuary. The book is the Book of the Gospels. If a deacon is present, it is his function to carry it, since he reads the Gospel at Mass. If no deacon is present the lector carries the Book. The Book is, just as its name implies, a book that contains just the Gospels. This differs from the Lectionary, which includes all the Scripture Readings, not just the Gospel.

We place special reverence on this Book because of its contents. During the Gospel, we believe that it is Christ Himself speaking to us. That is why only a priest or deacon proclaims it. That's why we stand. That's why there's a procession before the Gospel is read. That's why candles are used. That's why we sing Alleluia before the Gospel. Because it's special!

Placing the Book of the Gospels on the altar at the beginning of Mass is a sign of the unity of the two parts of the Mass – the Liturgy of the Word and the Liturgy of the Eucharist.

Do you know why the Book of the Gospels, or the Lectionary for that matter, is not carried out in the Closing Procession? It's because, we the people, take the Word of God with us. It has been proclaimed to us, and we now are to take it and live it.

- The Lectors have also begun to read the announcements at the end of Mass. This is just another way for the lay faithful to play a greater role in the Mass.

- Also, the Extraordinary Ministers of Communion now remain in the sanctuary until the Blessed Sacrament is reposed in the tabernacle. Since their ministry involves a special respect and devotion to the Eucharist, this gesture is a physical manifestation of that reverence for the Eucharist. This should certainly be a model for all of us.

- Finally, one more change will be coming soon. At the beginning of Mass, we will be invited to greet each other. This is not the same as the Sign of Peace. This is a greeting and it is in line with the parish's vision that we, as parishioners of St. Elizabeth of the Trinity, have a welcoming spirit and meaningful encounters with each other, recognizing the teaching that we are to see Christ in each other.

Next time when you are at Mass, I'd like to suggest that you look for these changes. Reflect on why they are important. This plays into how we are called to participate in Mass: fully, actively, consciously. It is only if we follow these three guidelines will we truly receive all the spiritual benefits that the Mass has to offer!

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