



The Mass Makes Sense!

by Margaret M. Meyers

Occasionally, I'm asked to sing at weddings. After a particularly frustrating session with a young bride-to-be, I was 'venting' to a good friend of mine, who isn't Catholic. I noted that it is difficult to explain our wedding "rules" to a person who had very little appreciation of what

Catholic Liturgy was all about. My friend said to me, in a sympathetic tone, that is because they see the rituals as archaic and having no meaning in today's society. I said, sadly, that he was probably right. They really don't "get it." We as a church haven't properly taught the art of Liturgy.

He said, "Well, it is because your Church's rituals are archaic and have no meaning in today's world."

Trying very hard to put my emotional reaction aside, I struggled with a "diplomatic" way to explain that he couldn't be more wrong. In fact, he just didn't 'get it' either. I never did come up with one and we just had to change the subject.

In the months since, I have thought often of that experience and that conversation. You know how it is, I'm sure. After a conversation, you spend hours thinking of the things you should have said.

Here's what I wish I said to my friend ...

Catholic Liturgy is not archaic, but it is ancient.

While a liturgy today might look very different than the gatherings in the early Christian homes, the roots

are there and they are strong and thriving. While the roots certainly are ancient, Liturgy, itself, is timeless. When we enter in full participation we are stepping out of time into an eternal realm with the entire communion of saints. What can be more awesome than that?

In Liturgy, we meet Jesus, our Lord, in the most intimate of ways. He becomes part of us in the Eucharist and we become a part of him and each other.

What more can one ask for?

At Mass, we are at home no matter where we are.

Catholic Liturgy is based on a ritual formula. Our Liturgy is "familiar." The structure is comfortable. While there is room for deviation in the formula, there are limits on that deviation that we sometimes struggle with. But while this may seem stifling to some, it does have the result of making us a universal church.

I remember traveling Europe and going to mass in Belgium on a Sunday after Easter. I felt as if I had as much right to be there as someone baptized in that

Church, because, in a way, I was. While I didn't remember enough of my high school French to understand more than a rare word, I knew what was going on. I knew when to sit and kneel and stand and I knew what the prayers were even though I couldn't say them in the same language as the person behind me. I even knew that the Gospel was the story of Thomas meeting Jesus in the upper room, even though I couldn't translate a word of it as it was proclaimed by the priest that day.



Liturgy took me out of a “specific” location where I was a stranger, and created a new place of being where I belonged totally. It was a profoundly spiritual experience.

Our Liturgy is ritual art at its best.

That “formula” we have, creates the framework for an experience that is deeply enriched by symbols, expressing meanings beyond mere words, if someone only bothers to reflect on them. Liturgy creates an experience that speaks to the totality of the human person and experience: the right brain and the left; the verbal and the visual; auditory and kinetic; the conscious and the subconscious; no matter the economic or educational experience; no matter the ethnic background or the degree of intelligence or emotional development.

In Liturgy, we meet Jesus, our Lord, in the most intimate of ways. He becomes part of us in the Eucharist and we become a part of him and each other.

Liturgy is an encounter with God.

What more can one ask for?

Well, we can ask for it to be always at its best, always done well, and we know sometimes our efforts fall short. But even then, because the ritual creates such a rich framework, it carries us still into the best of what God offers us: The Word, the Eucharist and, most of all, God’s love for us in creation and through each other. What a totally awesome gift that is for us. And, as with the best of all gifts, it never goes out of style.

It’s true, that many of us Catholics haven’t learned to treasure it as we should. But, at its best, we’re part

of Mass when we are ‘there’ and responsive to the prayers and songs. When we’re present in heart and soul and body, worshipping God together, and when Scripture is broken open in a way that helps us see how it relates to our life in the world, we meet our God in all of that.

Nothing can be better.☒

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