

LITURGY NOTES

We continue with the sixth of our 18-week program describing the various parts of the Mass.

Liturgy of the Word (Overview)

When the Sacred Scriptures are read in the Church, God is really speaking to his people and Christ, present in his own Word, proclaims the Gospel. A fuller understanding and a greater effectiveness of the Word is fostered by a living commentary on the Word: the Homily. The main part of the Liturgy of the Word is made up of the readings from Sacred Scripture together with chants occurring between them. The Homily, Profession of Faith and Prayer of the Faithful conclude this part of the Mass. The Liturgy of the Word and the Liturgy of the Eucharist, which follows, form one act of worship.

First Reading:

An integral element of the Jewish synagogue service was the reading of the Law and the Prophets. This Jewish tradition, as well as the conviction that the Scriptures are God's inspired word, resulted in the inclusion of at least one Old Testament reading in the early Christian Liturgy of the Word. At Rome, it is believed that this reading was followed by two New Testament selections, one being the Gospel.

Now in light of the reforms of Vatican II, on Sundays and major feasts there are always three readings. The first is from the Old Testament and prepares us for the Gospel.

Responsorial Psalm:

After the first reading comes the Responsorial Psalm. It is a continuation of the practice of the Jewish synagogue and the early Christians who traditionally sang a psalm or biblical canticle after the first reading. On Sundays it is usually sung.