

## **Gospel Acclamation/Alleluia**

The Hebrew "Halleluiah" (Alleluia in Greek and Latin) means "Praise YHWH", the Hebrew letters for the divine name, never pronounced aloud in Judaism out of a profound respect for its holiness. It can also be translated as "Praise the Lord". In the Old Testament this joyful cry appears at the beginning and end of certain psalms, intended for use during Temple liturgy. Alleluia appears only once in the New Testament, in the Book of Revelation (19:1-9), where it forms part of a victory hymn sung by the redeemed in heaven;

An acclamation such as Alleluia constitutes a rite or act in itself, by which the assembly of the faithful welcomes and greets the Lord, who is about to speak to them in the Gospel and professes its faith by means of the chant. It is sung by all while standing and is led by the cantor, being repeated as appropriate. The verse, however, is sung only by the cantor, and the verses are taken from the Lectionary. The Alleluia is not sung during Lent.

## **Gospel**

The reading of the Gospel is the high point of the Liturgy of the Word. From earliest times the primacy of the Gospel has been emphasized by special signs of respect and honor. The liturgy, itself, teaches that great reverence is to be shown to the Gospel by setting it off from the other readings with special markings of honor and the assembly standing as it is read.

The use of a special book for the proclamation of the Gospel has been a long tradition in the Church. Our present Book of the Gospels reintroduces us to liturgical tradition that visually tells us that the Gospel is a special part of God's holy word, containing in a unique way the incarnate Word himself speaking to us. The procession with this book has also been restored to the post Vatican II Mass. Whether solemn or simple in form, there is a Gospel procession in every celebration of the Mass.

During the singing of the Alleluia, if incense is used, the priest puts some into the thurible and blesses it. Then with hands joined, he bows profoundly before the altar and quietly says, "*Munda cor meum*" (May the word of the Gospel wipe away our sins). If the Book of the Gospels is on the altar, the priest or deacon takes it and goes to the ambo, carrying it slightly elevated and preceded by lay ministers, who may carry the thurible and candles.

At the ambo the presider (priest or deacon) opens the book and with hands joined, says, "The Lord be with you" and the people respond,

"And also with you". Then he says, "A reading from the holy Gospel", making the sign of the cross with his thumb on the book and his forehead, mouth and breast, which everyone else does as well. The people say the acclamation, "Glory to you, Lord". The priest incenses the book, if incense is used and then proclaims the Gospel. Following his reading of the Gospel, he states the acclamation, "The Gospel of the Lord", to which all respond, "Praise to you Lord Jesus Christ". The priest then kisses the book, saying quietly, "The words of the Gospel".

## **Homily**

The word "homily" comes from the Greek for instruction or informal discourse. A strong homiletic tradition was the product of the age of St. Augustine (354-430), St. John Chrysostom (c.347-407) and St. Leo the Great (d.461). Two characteristics mark this tradition: the theme is selected from the day's readings or another part of the celebration and the type of speech is somewhat informal, lacking oratorical style and designed to elicit a response from the people. Although a certain enthusiasm for preaching existed during the middle ages, it was more preaching by the mendicant orders and usually took place apart from the Mass.

The Second Vatican Council underlined the importance of the homily and recognized it as an integral part of the Mass, nurturing Christian life, as the mysteries of the faith and the guiding principles of Christianity are expounded from the sacred texts during the liturgical year. A homily is required on Sundays and holy days of obligation at all Masses celebrated with the participation of a congregation and is recommended on other days when people come to church in great numbers.

The homily is ordinarily given by the priest celebrant himself. He may entrust it to a concelebrating priest or occasionally, according to circumstances to a deacon. In particular cases and for just cause, the homily may even be given by a bishop or a priest who is present at the celebration, but can not concelebrate.