



The Five Senses and the Mass: Part II

Continuing our discussion of the five senses and the Mass, we come to that of smell. The sense of smell figures prominently in the Catholic worship experience. Almost always, incense comes to mind when we think of smell in the liturgy. We say that the incense reminds us that our prayers are going up to the Lord. Smoke rises and so do our prayers. In the Catholic tradition, incense can be used to reverence the altar at the beginning of Mass, the ambo just before the reading of the Gospel and the gifts of bread and wine after they have been offered up to the Lord. In funeral liturgies, the casket containing the body of the deceased (or the urn containing the cremains) is incensed. Many people, including myself, upon smelling the incense call to mind times when they have been present for certain liturgies (particularly Holy Thursday) and when Eucharistic processions took place.

The sense of sound involves both the prayers said either by the celebrant or those in the assembly as well as the music. Having a good sound system is most important. Being in churches over the years where the sound system was less than adequate created much frustration for everyone. We are blessed to have a good sound system at St. James the Apostle Parish.

Since liturgy, by definition, is “the work of the people”, both celebrant and assembly must be able to hear each other and take in the words that are spoken. We address each other (such as in the Confiteor) and the Lord. We also listen to the Word of the Lord in the liturgy. The Word is spoken from the ambo and done with dignity and reverence. The Eucharistic Prayer, containing the words of consecration, is to be listened to attentively, and is being prayed vocally by the celebrant, but all people are included in the prayer.

Music is also a very important part of the liturgy and even though people have different ideas as to what is appropriate, all agree (with the exception of some who say that music unnecessarily lengthens the liturgy) that hymns of praise and thanksgiving bring what is in the soul of the person to the forefront. One sings as a response to what one has experienced and one sings to bring him or her closer to God. Praise, thanksgiving and petition are all important here.

Father David

Next week: The senses of touch and taste

ST. JOSEPH TABLE ► SUNDAY, MARCH 19TH, AFTER THE 11:00 A.M. MASS

St. James the Apostle Parish will be holding its third annual St. Joseph table. More information to follow.