



The Five Senses and the Mass

In our Roman Catholic liturgy there is a long history of sight, smell, sound, touch and taste that put together gives the worshiper an experience that can be said to affect both body and soul. Since we are corporeal beings, the role of that which affects or is affected by the senses is no small matter. Each of our five senses is in some way affected by what takes place in the liturgy. How well the liturgy is experienced depends to a great degree upon how well the senses have been included in the worship itself.

I begin with sight. In this country, a great many Roman Catholic churches, up until the 1960's, were either Gothic style, in some way representing the grand churches of Europe, or reflected architecture that was standard for the day. In any case, the space was quite uniform. People would comment that you could go to any Catholic church in the world and know immediately that it was "Catholic." Style of brick, lighting, marble, etc. would vary but overall, the churches had the same design regarding space (i.e., nave and sanctuary) and liturgical furnishings including statues, Stations of the Cross, holy water fonts and stained glass windows were standard.

Catholic churches today, including our own, continue to involve the sense of sight. The sanctuary is separate from the nave (the space for the congregation) and one clearly sees that the altar, ambo (where the Scriptures are proclaimed) and celebrant's chair are the three major furnishings in that sacred space. The tabernacle in most churches will also be visible and with its nearby sanctuary lamp, remind the worshiper that the Lord is present in the Blessed Sacrament. The Baptismal Fount, statues, Stations of the Cross and the crucifix round out the essentials of what is to be found in the church.

Regarding the liturgy itself and sight, there is much that can be said. The liturgical articles such as the Lectionary (the book from which the readings are proclaimed), Roman Missal (the book the priest uses for the prayers of the Mass), sacred vessels (the chalice, paten, cups, ciboria containing the hosts that will be consecrated,) and vestments all play an important part of what the worshiper and celebrant experiences. The celebrant may actually have more "hands on" contact with some of these articles, but all in the church see them and know that in some way they play a necessary and important part of the worship experience.

Next week: Smell, sound, touch, taste

Father David

Thank You!

I would like to express my gratitude to all who helped with Bishop Conlon's visit to our parish last weekend. The Bishop felt very much at home and was truly impressed by all of the hospitality shown him during his stay (*including hospitality after all the weekend Masses.*) His schedule for the three days was full of meetings with parishioners, staff, school children and faculty, pastoral care ministers, our youth ministry group, heads of ministries, parish council members and local civic/business leaders. Pastorally, the Bishop was able to visit with some of our shut-ins and residents of Arden Court, tour the College of DuPage, as well as the Glen Ellyn Food Pantry. The final activity allowed the Bishop to have a tour of Glen Ellyn with our Police Chief Philip Norton, who was able to speak with the Bishop about the village, demographics, etc. May God bless you all!

Father David