

Roman Missal, 3rd Edition

Looking at the text 3

Readings and the Homily and reflect on what we have heard. We have silence after receiving Holy Communion to pray to the Lord who comes to dwell in the home of our heart, under our roof.

The Prayer of the Faithful is another time for silence. The Second Vatican Council called for a restoration of the Bidding Prayer, or General Intercessions, as part of our response in the Liturgy of the Word. The Missal shows us how they are to be written. The reader announces subjects for which the people can pray. In other words what the reader says aloud are not prayers in themselves, they are invitations to pray about something. It is for us to pray to God in the silence of our hearts during a pause that is supposed to follow.

Certain subjects are to be included: the needs of the Church, public authorities and the salvation of the world, those oppressed by any need, the local community. We adapt these to circumstances. The Intercessions should reflect the liturgical day and its readings, be relevant to our lives and attentive to current events. Those who write them should have on their desks the Lectionary and a newspaper.

Having invited the people to pray the reader should pause. Only then should come the formula that invites a response (e.g. 'Lord, in your mercy'). It is the silence which is the essential part of the intercessions that makes them prayers. The formula draws to a close the congregation's prayer on this subject as they express their requests in a public way. To introduce this immediately after having read out the intercession is to prevent the real prayer that might be about to take place.

We need a lot more silence in our Mass. It can be golden.

Q *Do you think we take enough time to pause and think during Mass? How can we improve the use of silence in the Bidding Prayer and elsewhere?*

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The Liturgy of the Word

If someone finds a treasure chest they want to open it and look inside. They spread the treasures out to appreciate each wonderful thing to be found. At the Second Vatican Council the Church said that 'the treasures of the bible are to be opened up more lavishly, so that richer fare may be provided for the faithful at the table of God's word.' To make this renewal of the Liturgy of the Word possible a three year cycle of readings was introduced with three passages of Scripture to be proclaimed at Sunday Mass. This means that Sunday by Sunday we hear a great deal of the Bible so that the Word of God may inform, inspire and sustain us.

A great conversation takes place in the Liturgy of the Word. Christ speaks to us in the First Reading and we reply using God's word in singing or saying the Responsorial Psalm. He speaks again to us and we answer with an acclamation as we prepare to hear the Gospel. We must listen and speak carefully, reflecting on what he says to us. In the Homily the Word is broken open for us by the preacher. Silence after the readings and the homily can be a great help to us as we think about what we have heard. Our profession of faith in the Creed and the Bidding Prayer are other ways in which we respond to God's Word.

The new translation helps make things clearer. The reader now says 'The Word of the Lord' which is supposed to be an enthusiastic acclamation not simply a statement of fact 'this is the Word of the Lord'. Our responses should be filled with appreciation, praise and thanksgiving. We might sing them to emphasise this.

We speak of the table of God's Word. This is an ancient idea in which see ourselves being fed both by the Word of God and Holy Communion. Christ wonderfully present



under the appearances of Bread and Wine nourishes us. He is also present when the scriptures are proclaimed and he feeds us with his teaching. He speaks in our hearts, proclaiming his summons, announcing his words of new life and whispering his message of comfort. It is Christ who speaks as readers open their mouths to proclaim the readings. They have a great task and privilege to read well so that we may be fed properly.

The Word of God is something alive and active. It feeds us and gives us life. It moves us to change ourselves and change the world; a treasure to be opened so that everyone may have true riches.

Q *How can we be more open to God's Word in preparing and celebrating Mass as a parish community and as individuals?
How might silence or song help us be aware of Jesus speaking to us?*

The Creed

Can you remember when you first heard the Creed? Chances are you don't. It is used at baptism which, for many, takes place when we are small. At every baptism either the parents and godparents or the persons being baptised profess their faith.

There are two Creeds used regularly; the Apostles' Creed and the Nicene. The Apostles' Creed was first used at baptisms in ancient Rome. The Nicene Creed was drawn largely from the work of the Councils of Nicea and Constantinople which affirmed that Jesus is both God and a human being. Originally it too was used with those who were to be baptised. Because of this it began with I believe.

We believe, I believe

The Nicene Creed was introduced at Mass in the Eastern Church and the 'I' was altered to 'We' for congregations to recite. We started reciting it at Mass in Rome and the west of Europe much later. We have always used the version written for baptism and in Latin it begins 'credo' - 'I believe'. The creed is said towards the end of the Liturgy of the Word as we remember and respond to the call and message of God.

Beginning with 'we believe' helps us say that we share our faith with others. On the other hand, using 'I believe' reminds me of the promises made at baptism. As I pray the creed I remember that I am a member of the family of the Church. We emphasise this at Easter when we renew our baptismal promises by using the question and answer form based on the Apostles' Creed. We think about Baptism a great deal in the seasons of Lent and Easter and so we can use the Apostles' Creed at Mass during these times.

Consubstantial with the Father

The Nicene Creed helps focus on who God the Son is and on his Incarnation. We speak of him as God from God, Light from Light etc. We use the word 'consubstantial' to say that Jesus has the same nature as God and that he is God himself. Our faith in the Trinity means we believe in three persons who are not three Gods but one God. In Jesus, God took our human nature so that the person who is the eternal Son of God was born in time and is the person who is the Son of Mary. We bow as a sign of respect (at Christmas, we genuflect) at the words, 'and by the Holy Spirit was incarnate of the Virgin Mary, and became man'.

The Creed is a sign we are in God's family, it is important we know it and love it.

Q *Pray through the Creed and think about the meaning of the words.*

Let us pray

Silence is golden. There are times when we yearn for the chance to stop and think, to be silent and pray. The Church encourages us to do this especially at Mass. It provides us with two opportunities during the Introductory Rites to stop and think. We pause to reflect upon our need for forgiveness in the Penitential Rite and we think of the intentions we bring to church as we pause before the Collect. We are also advised to stop after the

