

Companion guide
to the video

RITUAL

The Language of Worship



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Companion guide to the video **Ritual: The Language of Worship**

PREPARATION — GROUP SHARING

Recall a significant worship experience that you have had.

What made this experience significant for you?

How was this experience a way of knowing God?

(After sharing)

What was similar in the various experiences?

SEGMENT I

GESTURES

Why is it important to understand the signs and ritual the priest performs at the Eucharist?

Ritual is sign language. It is difficult to understand what is being said until the sign is understood. A sacrament is defined as an outward sign, instituted by Christ to give grace (to cause what it signifies, portrays the hidden reality, etc.). Ritual tells the story of what God is doing with us, for us, among us.

How will this help in understanding the rituals of other denominations and people of different faiths?

By showing that there is a similarity from the earliest recorded worship in history to what we are doing now. Many of the denominations of Christianity take their ritual worship from Catholicism beginning with the Reformation in the 1500s.

What does "liturgy" mean?

"Liturgy" is taken from a Greek word that translates to "work of the people."

What does the altar represent?

The altar has always symbolized God's presence. Whatever is placed upon the altar is placed before God.

What are the two forms of altars?

The altar of sacrifice and the altar of sharing food. Both capture the profound desire of the human being to surrender and sacrifice yet share and become intimate with God.

What is the difference between primary worship and secondary worship?

Primary is that chosen by God (the tree in Paradise), and secondary worship is that fashioned by human beings (everyday prayer, flowers by the altar).

How is the story of Cain and Abel relevant to worship?

They were the sons of Adam and Eve, who were asked by God to offer the first and best fruits of their labor (primary worship). Cain did not believe in giving his very best, and the smoke of his burnt offering crept along the ground showing God's displeasure. Abel gave the very best of his flock, and the smoke from his oblation ascended to the heavens showing that God was pleased.

What is a "type" in scripture?

A "type" is a biblical person who represents similar types of people as the centuries go by (e.g., "that person is a Moses"). Cain represents all worshiping people who believe God is really not there or does not care for what is being portrayed in the liturgy. People similar to Abel do believe that God is present during their worship. At every worship there are Cains and Abels.

What is the main characteristic of meaningful ritual?

Simplicity. Don't complicate and distract with gestures and actions.

What is the meaning of the Holy Water font?

Plain water fills the font at the different church entrances. It is there for people to take the water and remember their baptism, which is each one's promise of a destiny with God through Jesus Christ. This great citizenship of a Christian can be remembered by a simple trace of water across the forehead or the making of the sign of the cross.

What did you think of Tom O'Brien's simple faith? What were Tom's meanings for taking the water and making the sign of the cross?

- A. To love God with all his mind, heart, and strength.
- B. My mind is all fouled up, my heart's broken, and I'm tired.
- C. I want to go to the Creator, who is head of all; Jesus, who dwells among us; and the Holy Spirit, who gives us strength.

What were Tom's meanings for his genuflection?

- A. O Jesus, I worship you with all my being.
- B. Here's Tom at your service.
- C. As the Magi knelt before the Lord, so do I.
- D. To my Lord and King.

What is the meaning of "it is no sin not to ritualize, but it may be a sin if you do"?

All ritual is a privilege. Doing ritual badly is mockery.

What were Jesus' words about this?

"They honor me with their lips, but their hearts are far from me."

PREPARATION FOR THE WORSHIP

Did Jesus draw upon human worship and custom practiced before his time for the institution of the Eucharist?

Yes. Jesus incorporated the ancient use of bread and wine in worship. The breaking of the bread symbolized the covenant, "I will be your God and you will be my people." The use of table (altar) portrayed the human desire to break bread with God. Future Church practice would employ even more ancient rituals.

What did the bread mean for people of all ages?

It meant hard labor and earnings for work.

What did the wine mean for people of all ages?

How people feel (spirit) while they work and live. It also means "joy."

How does this fit into the symbolism of the use of bread and wine at the Eucharist?

We offer all that we do and all that we feel to our God through the priesthood of Jesus Christ.

What does the candle symbolize?

It symbolizes the presence of the Light of the World.

What are the two main symbols of Christ's presence at the Eucharist?

The presence of Jesus Christ (1) in the bread and wine as well as (2) in the Word, the scripture readings.

The Eastern Byzantine Rite Catholics often have two tabernacles for the presence of Jesus Christ. What does each represent?

They represent Jesus Christ present in the Word, and Jesus Christ present in the consecrated bread and wine.

VESTMENTS

Is there historical evidence that the different tribes and people have adorned their priest or priestess in special ways for rituals?

Yes, there is abundant evidence.

What seems to be the human desire in doing this?

Adorned in this way, the priest or priestess visually represents God, the Transcendent. God then would be present among them as they prayed and worshiped. Jesus supported this when he said, "Where two or three are gathered in my name, there I am in the midst of them. "

What is the origin and meaning of the vestments the priest wears?

The origin is simply that this was like the clothing worn in the Roman era in which Jesus lived.

A. The chasuble is similar to the Roman toga worn at festive times. It means a “little tent.”

B. Alb. The undergarment, probably very similar to what Jesus and others wore at that time. The word means white.

C. The stole worn straight down resembles what the judges wore. It is a sign of authority with the power to grant citizenship.

It is said that the priest has the sacrament of Holy Order(s). What does that mean?

Certain individuals are chosen from the Faith community to lead worship and to bring sacred order to it.

In Catholicism, what does the garbed priest symbolize?

The garbed priest symbolizes that Jesus Christ is really the priest present who will change the bread and wine into His own presence once again.

SEGMENT II

ALTAR

What do the folded hands symbolize?

The hands folded symbolize prayer.

When the priest leans on the altar, what is he stating ?

He is stating that he and all the community are dependent upon God, the source of our being.

The priest kisses the altar; what does that mean?

This kiss has the special meaning of “God, you are beautiful!”

What is the meaning of beginning the Eucharist with the sign of the cross?

By making the sign of the cross, we are now showing that we know the most sacred worship of our redemption is at hand.

Before the Council of Vatican II (1962-65), liturgies were defined by rubrics. After the Council, the Church established norms for the liturgy. What is the difference?

Rubrics are specific directives that call for an exact performance by the priest and people. Norms are directives, but more relaxed, allowing approved variations for communities of different ages or ethnic origins.

What is the religious meaning of blessing?

A blessing is the Church’s way of conveying the truth that God makes special certain objects for worship and touches people with special favors. Every time we are blessed we can wait for something special to happen — God will touch us with something special for life.

In the history of worship, what is a typical way of beginning the ritual?

Throughout the centuries it is characteristic for people to feel unworthy to enter into the presence of the Divine. As a consequence, almost always there is some sort of cleansing rite which initiates the worship.

What would be that rite in Christianity?

There is evidence that both the "Lord have mercy" and "I confess . . ." was the cleansing rite since the very early Christian Church.

What is significant about the Gloria of the Mass?

The Gloria begins the mood of celebration. After the proclamation of forgiveness by the priest, it is time to be joyful before the Divine.

What does the priest call for when he says, "Let us pray"?

He is calling for the people to pray individually.

What is noteworthy about the concluding phrase of all the prayers of the Mass?

Catholics are sometimes accused of praying through Mary or the saints and not Jesus Christ. All official prayers of the Church are "through Jesus Christ . . ."

LITURGY OF THE WORD

What is the main purpose of the Liturgy of the Word?

The main purpose is to hear God's instruction for life and to generate the faith to know that God is present through Jesus Christ our Divine Priest.

What is the structure of the liturgy of the word?

The first reading is usually (though not always) from the Old Testament (Hebrew Scriptures), which brings forth the origin of our faith. This is usually in harmony with the Gospel, the life and word of Jesus.

The responsorial psalm is the entire community's response to the first reading. The second reading is taken from the Epistles, which are the reflections of the faith of the early Christian community in the risen Jesus.

What was the intent of the liturgists in often having the second reading out of harmony with the others?

The deliberate intent of the liturgists was to have the religious needs of individuals present who were not addressed by readings one, three and the responsorial psalm.

What does "alleluia" mean?

Allelu means "praise" and *ia* is short for Yahweh — "praise God."

At the Gospel the priest signs the book, his forehead, his lips, and his heart. What is the meaning of this?

Similar actions are found in other religious groups apropos to their sacred texts. The meaning here is "may the word of Jesus Christ be on our minds that we think of it, on our lips that we proclaim it, and that we treasure it within our hearts. "

Why does the congregation stand for the Gospel?

Going back to the early Christian community, those who were in the catechumenate had to learn and witness to the words and person of Jesus Christ before they were baptized. Standing for the Gospel means that everyone present there on hearing Jesus' words and His life will proclaim that to someone before the sun sets.

The Creed. This profession of faith dates back to the

Council of Nicaea in 325. It was written to clarify statements about the Trinity. It would make a moving meditation about God. It is prayed only on Sundays and special feast days.

What is the purpose of the vigil lights in the church?

The one who lit the vigil light wanted to signal to all the community that he or she has something very special and would like everyone who came there to pray for that intention. The Prayers of the Faithful, or the intercessory prayers, facilitate this more effectively.

Are there any other purposes for the Prayers of the Faithful?

In general, the Prayers of the Faithful want to raise the community's awareness of concerns and issues for the Kingdom. When they are concise, well-stated and insightful, they can be a powerful tool for inspiring the community to prayer and action. The intention of these prayers is to include a larger portion of the universal Church.

When an individual parishioner is mentioned, adding the words "and all people who are . . ." makes the prayer more inclusive of the global community. Caution should be taken in stating the petition. Instead of saying, "that God may take care of all abused children," it should be "that God may inspire competent people to take care of abused children."

Is the collection necessary?

Yes. It is the most effective way for the community to support the poor, diocesan projects for the needy, worship itself, just salaries for ministry, and maintenance of structures. The collection has been there from the beginning of Christianity.

SEGMENT III

PREPARATION OF THE GIFTS

What is the meaning of bringing the bread, wine and collection from the people up to the altar?

Bread and wine were used by Jesus at the Last Supper. Also, the bread signifies all that we have; the wine, all that we are. In a sense, the whole assembly is placed on the altar to be consecrated before God.

The collection is the community's support of the Kingdom.

What is unique about the prayer the priest says in offering the bread and the wine?

Originally this prayer was a Jewish prayer-blessing, and it could have been similar to the very one that Jesus used at the Last Supper. The response could have been very similar to the response of the apostles to Jesus' prayer.

What is the purpose of the priest's mingling a little water with the wine?

The prayer that the priest prays explains the meaning as well: "O God, who beautifully created human nature and still more beautifully established it anew, grant by the mingling of this water and wine, that we may become partakers of your Divine Nature as Jesus became a partaker of our human nature."

The priest's washing his hands. Shouldn't he do that before the entire ceremony?

Most likely he does before Mass begins. However, this ritual washing reminds us of when the Christian community supported the poor, the sick and the shut-ins in kind. When the priest accepted the pig, chicken, melon, wheat, eggs, and fruit, he had to wash his hands afterwards.

LITURGY OF THE EUCHARIST

At the beginning of the Preface, the priest gestures to the people. Why isn't that reciprocal?

In many areas, the people are more passive than others. In some places, the people respond in voice and gesture, no doubt the original intent.

Do the people ever have the thrill of praying with angels?

Yes. At the Eucharist. They pray with angels at the "Holy, Holy . . ."

What does the Church proclaim now in the Eucharist prayer?

With the awesome moment of Jesus' memorial supper approaching, God's magnificent, awesome presence and loving plan are recalled, and the Divine Spirit is called down upon the people and the gifts to consecrate them with the Divine presence of Jesus Christ.

The priest extends his hands over the bread and wine. Why is that?

From time immemorial in the history of worship, human beings have asked that their weakness and their sin be placed upon goats, lambs, bulls with the gesture of extending the hands. When the animal was sacrificed, that meant forgiveness, or the taking away of their sin. St. Paul clarified this when he stated, "He (Jesus) entered, not with the blood of goats and calves, but with His own blood . . . (Heb. 9:12).

What is the origin of the memorial acclamations?

The acclamations originate very early in the Eucharist service. They seem to stem from the belief and excitement that after the words of consecration from Jesus' last supper, the risen Christ was physically present among them.

Is there any pattern or points of emphasis that the Eucharistic prayer follows after the acclamations?

Very much so! The presider thanks God for the life, death and resurrection of the Son, and the community's excitement about His presence, as well as His final glorious return.

The rest is about the glorious Communion of Saints today.

The praise that all present may be filled with the Holy Spirit, which would lead to the glorious sharing of the lives of the saints in heaven, blessing on the leadership throughout the Church today, those in ministry, the people present, unity for all the varied peoples, those who have completed the journey of life, and our great expectation of sharing glory through our Savior.

The concluding proclamation, “through Him, with Him...” is a prayer that crescendos in the primacy of Jesus Christ.

Ecumenically, why wasn't the phrase “for the Kingdom, the power, and the glory” added on to the Lord's Prayer?
To bring about some sign of unity with our Protestant brothers and sister, the liturgist did think of this. It must be remembered that the phrase did not originate with the Reformation in the 1500s. It appears in the earliest Christian catechism, the Didache, from the first century. Those were not the words of Jesus when he taught the Our Father. To favor the accuracy of scripture, the phrase was added later.

Sometimes a congregation holds hands during the Lord's Prayer. Why?
Sketches on walls of the catacombs often show the early Christians with this gesture indicating that they are brothers and sisters in Christ. So, too, today.

Why do many priests emphasize the breaking of the bread at this point?
Throughout the history of all peoples, those with whom you ate (breaking bread) you would die for. That is a sign of Jesus' covenant with His people. A most profound theology lies behind its meaning.

What is the purpose of the Kiss of Peace?
Jesus said, “Leave your gift at the altar, go make your peace with the others, and then come back to the altar.” The Kiss of Peace is doing what Jesus said. In a monastery, convent and parish setting, it could be quite challenging. Everyone was baptized into the priesthood of Jesus Christ. At the Kiss of Peace all exercised their priestly calling by blessing each other.

It seems awkward to call Jesus a Lamb. Why do we do this?
A Christian almost has to be Jewish to understand this one. For the Jew the lamb was their clothing, tents, parchment for writing, medium of exchange, food, and their worship. It could be said that the lamb was “their everything.” Most people think sacrifice when they hear the word; it means much more than that.

Why have we started to enlist lay ministers of Communion?
Every baptized person is commissioned to take Jesus Christ to the world. Ministering Communion comes with baptism, not just ordination.

What are some insights about the dismissal?
The very word “Mass” means sent, from the Latin word *missus* — to be sent. The ritual speaks for itself. The priest uses both arms to gesture to the heavens and calls down a blessing from the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit on the people. He follows with words, or other similar ones, “Let us go forth to love and serve the Lord.” A song of thanksgiving is sung.

The priest ends the Eucharist the same way he began by leaning on the altar, kissing the altar, going around to the front, bowing, and then going down among the people. The gesture of the priest going down among the people signifies that his ministry of bringing holy order to the worship is now complete. It is now time for the ministry of priestly people to begin.