

The Role of the Assembly

by Cardinal Roger M. Mahony

The Second Vatican Council called for the “full, conscious, and active participation by all the faithful” at the liturgy (*Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy* 14). Here are several habits that each churchgoing Catholic can begin to cultivate that will bring us together into a life-giving liturgical practice Sunday after Sunday.

Become people who worship in the midst of the Sunday liturgy.

Prepare by using the Sunday Gospel and New Testament letter in your daily reading. Bring to the prayer of intercession on Sunday all that you pray for; take from it persons to be remembered daily by you. Hear the daily news of your community and the world as a Christian called to lift up the world’s needs in prayer. Mark with prayer your morning rising and your evening going to bed: the Lord’s Prayer certainly, but also some song or psalm from the Sunday liturgy.

Become people who prepare for Sunday Liturgy and for whom Sunday Liturgy is preparation for the week. Seek little ways that can help make the Lord’s Day a day when liturgy has room. Find some habit for

Sunday morning that helps you anticipate joining the community at liturgy and stretch toward the Reign of God we glimpse at Mass. It might be a way to make more real the Sunday collection for the Church and the poor, or of extending the peace of Christ you receive each Sunday to others in need of that peace. It might be fasting from food or distractions to become thoroughly hungry for God’s Word and the Eucharistic banquet. It might be to form the habit of blessing your children, a practice that is so much to be praised in Hispanic families.

At the liturgy, be the Church.

Know the awesome responsibility you share for making this liturgy! Do not hide; do your private praying in the other hours of the week. Welcome one another, be at peace with one another. Sit together. Sing songs from your heart. Do not be afraid to show, in your eager attention, that you are hungry for God’s Word when the readers read; hungry for Christ’s Body and Blood when you come forward in procession to receive Holy Communion. Give thanks and praise

Cardinal Roger M. Mahony a native of Los Angeles, was named the Cardinal Archbishop of Los Angeles in 1991. He was ordained a priest in the diocese of Fresno, California in 1962, and appointed Auxiliary to the Bishop of Fresno in 1975. He served as Bishop of Stockton, California from 1980 to 1985, when he was appointed Archbishop of Los Angeles.

Cardinal Mahony’s many committee memberships for the National Conference of Catholic Bishops have included the areas of liturgy, pro-life activities, sexual abuse, migration and refugees, HIV/AIDS, and communications. He has served as a member of the Catholic Common Ground Initiative and of the advisory board for the Bernardin Center for Theology and Ministry. Cardinal Mahony has a long history of leadership in issues related to the social teachings of the Church.

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to God by your great attention in the Eucharistic Prayer. Keep your eyes open to one another and do everything you can to build up the Church, the Body of Christ. If the presider or homilist needs help, do not criticize—help.

Apart from the liturgy, be the Church.

Remember we are always the Body of Christ in communion with one another. In the simplest deeds of daily life, at work or at home, be conscious of this life we share in Christ. Look at the liturgy as a remote preparation for your week. Listening to God's Word on Sunday is preparation for listening for God's Word in

our lives all week. The thanks we proclaim at the Eucharistic Prayer is a preparation for thanks we offer every day. The common table of Holy Communion is a preparation for looking at the whole world.

Give thanks always. Pray grace at meals, even when you are alone. Sing when you are with others at table. Permeate your morning prayer and night prayer with praise and thanks to God. Enrich it with verses of psalms and prayers from the tradition. Cultivate moments of contemplation even during the busiest day, when gratitude can flow from the goodness of a person, any element of creation, or any good work of human making.

For Reflection

What good habit will you try to form to make your participation at Sunday Eucharist more complete?