

FROM THE PASTOR

My dear brothers and sisters,

As we look at the Liturgy of the Word, we now move to the Gospel Acclamation and the Gospel. At the Gospel Acclamation (usually an “Alleluia,” except during the Lenten Season) we stand up. Think about when guests come to your house, you stand and greet them. Christ is now being made present in His Gospel, and so we stand to greet Him.

The Acclamation is a song of praise to God (“Alleluia” means “Praise YHWH” or “Praise the LORD”). After the Alleluia, there is a verse from Scripture which is proclaimed (usually connected with the Gospel), and the Alleluia is sung again. This is a great opportunity to sing praise to our God!

The word “Gospel” means “Good News”. This is not just any ordinary news, though. It’s not like we’re hearing we’re having our favorite dish for dinner. The Gospel is the proclamation of a conquering king. In the ancient world, when the king would conquer in battle, they would send out messengers to the whole kingdom proclaiming this good news. Our Good News is that Christ has conquered. He did not conquer political battles. No, He conquered something much greater – sin, and even death itself! This is the GREATEST news! When we hear the Gospel proclaimed at Mass, it is how Jesus Christ has conquered the kingdom of darkness and is bringing about the reign of His Kingdom of Light!

You probably know that there are four Gospels: Matthew, Mark, Luke and John. You may not know that the Church has divided the Sunday readings into a three year cycle. They are (very originally) named years A, B, and C. Each year, we focus on reading through Matthew, Mark, and Luke, respectively. The Gospel of John is read at different times in all three years, especially during the Easter Season.

When the Gospel is announced, we say, “Glory to you, O Lord,” and we make a sign of the cross on our foreheads, our lips, and our hearts. When I was a kid, I thought people were all just itchy, and happened to be scratching themselves kind of at the same time! But really, we are preparing to hear the Word of God, as we pray interiorly: “May the Lord be in my mind, on my lips, and in my heart.” We ask for the Lord to be present to us so that we can hear and be open to His Word of life.

After the Gospel, the priest or deacon then gives the homily. The homily is meant to help make the Word of God accessible (explaining what it means) and practical for our lives, our circumstances, today. The homily can focus on any of the readings, any of the prayers at Mass, the feast day (if there is one), or the Church season. It is meant to engage us, to help us to grow closer to God, to help us enter more fully into the Eucharist we celebrate.