

Pastor's corner - November 13, 2011 - Liturgical Changes 3

As we come closer to the First Sunday of Advent when the Church is implementing the new revised English translation of the General Instruction of the Roman Missal (GIRM) and as we are going to implement new directives regarding the Liturgy of the Eucharist, I am faced with mixed feelings. I have tried to point out, in my previous pastor's corners on the proposed liturgical changes, the meaning and foundation of the proposed changes. Having new music entering our lives, adapting our English translation to some of the deeper meanings of the original Latin, respecting the beauty of silence and meditation, gestures and postures, they are all enrichments which beautify the celebration of the Eucharist. The unity that is called for on the part of both the presider as well as the faithful celebrating is positive. However, even if the new GIRM allows for some adaptations and very brief comments, in general I am afraid there is also more rigidity, rules and regulations to be observed: fewer opportunities to place the celebration in the context of the particular day, place and context. Unity slowly becomes uniformity. I suspect that there are some who will welcome all this because they probably thought that at times I took too many "liberties". But I know that there are many others who welcomed some of those supposed "liberties" because it helped them to understand the Word of God proclaimed and be challenged by it, helped them to celebrate the Eucharist in the context of their life and of our time, helped them to feel that the Eucharist was welcoming and inclusive. I have to be honest, I do not wish to be a pre-programmed robot and I do not want the Eucharist to become just a routine unfolding celebration.

I am also afraid that just because there were at times abuses, we are now faced with the loss of some beautiful poetic adaptations of Eucharistic Prayers and of other prayers which praised God in a way which made it so meaningful to today's people. The same can be said of songs and music composed, yes in those 70's and 80's, but which translated our hunger for God, for justice, for peace, in words and rhythm which are still meaningful to today's people. We need to be connected to the past and to our traditions but we also need to live in today's world. My sincere hope is that the pendulum which has obviously been swinging to the right may find a greater balance in the future, probably beyond my time. Let us continue to make sure that our Eucharistic Celebrations bring us all together, no matter what background, in order to feast on the Word and on the Bread of Life, the Cup of Salvation and on one another's faith and hope. Let us make sure that we take of this free holy food, break it open, consume it, digest it, so that it becomes us. And then when we are re-energized, when we have once more the courage and the consciousness of the presence of the Spirit in us, let us be the people of God sowing God's unconditional love for our community and for our world. The grace of the sacrament of the Eucharist in its totality is able to change us, and the more we are changed, the more able we become to change the world around us. After all, receiving the gift of the Eucharist (the Word, the Bread of Life, our common faith celebrated) can transform us into the Body of Christ and enable us to transform the world.

The parables which we hear proclaimed in these last few weeks of the Liturgical year all remind us that we need to look at our lives and see in how and what we invest our lives. After all, time and talents have been given to each of us, and when the time comes, we will be asked how we have used them. Today's parable suggests that living and loving according to the Gospel requires that we stop vegetating and take risks in serving others. How can we keep our faith and religion from becoming a freeze-dried package which is stored away for safe-keeping. That is not the way Jesus used his time and talents. We are not to be afraid but with the gifts of Lady Wisdom, we are called to use our time and talents to reach out. Remember C.S. Lewis in "*The Four Loves*," "The only place outside heaven where you can be safe from all the dangers and perturbations of love is hell."

Shalom,

Je Rolf, OP