

Rev. Derek Fairman

7<sup>th</sup> Sunday of Easter

I would like to continue my discussion about the liturgy, on this Seventh Sunday of the Easter. Sometimes we hear about “cosmic liturgy,” which sounds like the name of a bad science fiction novel, but the liturgy that we celebrate, the Mass, does extend beyond our time and space.

The overall structure of the Mass reflects the whole of salvation history. This is true especially in the Easter Vigil. The first part of the Easter Vigil is the Lucernarium. This is the ceremony of light. The darkness outside and in the church goes back to the beginning, when the Lord brought light out of darkness. The first possible reading for the Easter Vigil is the account of creation.

The Mass outside of the Easter Vigil does not quite reflect the beginning in the same way, although after the sign of the Cross and the greeting, the penitential rite does recall the ways that we have failed, and our need for redemption. This goes back to the beginning with original sin, and then we recall the Lord’s redemption and praise Him in the Gloria.

At all Masses, the Old Testament readings reflect the time of preparation after creation, but before the coming of the Son of God. These readings remind us of the ways that God was working to recreate His world, choosing a people to be His own, to the times when the Lord foretold the coming of His Son. This was a long time, but the Lord needed that time to make His people ready. During the Easter season, and other times, however, the first reading is from the Acts of the Apostles, or the Book of Revelation. The psalm is our response to the Lord’s good works, as recounted in the first reading. The psalm reflects Israel’s response to what God had done for them, and so we use the psalms to respond to what God has done for us.

The New Testament readings reflect the Lord Jesus and His time, a time of Resurrection and new life. At the Easter Vigil, the Gloria and New Testament readings reflect the coming of the Son and His Resurrection. The proclamation of the Good News at the Resurrection explains how the Lord was the culmination of all the preparation the Lord had undertaken. There is also the redemption of the whole universe which the Lord accomplished. The response to the New Testament reading is the alleluia, which at the Easter Vigil, is a psalm itself. The culmination of the Liturgy of the Word is the Gospel reading. The homily is meant to explain how the readings fit together, and apply the readings to our lives. The homily relates to what the Lord said, “Today, this Scripture passage is fulfilled in your hearing.”

At the Easter Vigil, the baptismal liturgy and initiations then relate to the time of the Church, when new members are being brought into the Church. The power of the Resurrection comes into the hearts of those who believe. Even those who are already baptized renew their promises, and we receive the sprinkling as a reminder of our baptism.

At Mass outside of the Easter Vigil, the Creed is placed after the homily on Sundays, Holy Days of Obligation, and other solemnities. It is placed at that point in the Mass as a conclusion of what came before, professing our belief in the Son of God. It also serves as a preparation of what comes after, that those who believe what the Creed professes are preparing to enter the Sacrifice. The intercessions guide us in what intentions we should offer.

Whether the Easter Vigil or any other Mass, the Liturgy of the Eucharist goes back to the Lord's Sacrifice, made at the Cross and which is present now, but also foreshadows the eternal banquet in Heaven. In the Gospel, we hear the Lord's prayer at the Last Supper. The Lord prayed in a way similar to the Eucharistic Prayers that we have at Mass now. As I mentioned on Thursday, the Ascension teaches us that the Lord has gone into Heaven, and the procession to the sanctuary reminds us of the Lord's Ascension. The sanctuary represents Heaven, and the Sacrifice made upon the altar takes us backwards and forwards to the banquet that awaits us in Heaven. Much of what we experience in the Liturgy of the Eucharist can be seen in the Book of Revelation, with the twenty-four elders and the four living creatures.

We remember that the Resurrection is awesome and wonderful in its own right, but it also shows us that we too will rise again on the last day. If we are faithful to the Lord, we will get to share in the eternal banquet, the wedding feast, that the Lord mentioned so many times. The prayer, greeting, and blessing at the end of Mass then send us forth to serve others in this world, as we await the world to come.

There is a way in which God's plan for the whole universe, or cosmos, is present at every Mass. The Mass is a microcosm of the whole of salvation history. This is all available to us at every Mass, although we do not always realize it.

As we approach the altar, we thank the Lord for all that He has done for us in the Mass that we celebrate. We ask Him to continue to intercede for us. We have so many needs, and the Lord knows what we need. He has established the Mass to meet our every need. When we come to Mass, we come knowing that we are connected to people of every time and place who have participated in the Lord's true Sacrifice.