

## 2. Gathering

What the assembly is  
and how it is called to be.

The Lord be with you.  
And with your spirit.

# Listen to Scripture

Come to him, a living stone,  
though rejected by mortals  
yet chosen and precious in God's sight,  
and like living stones,  
let yourselves be built into a spiritual house,  
to be a holy priesthood,  
to offer spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God  
through Jesus Christ.

For it stands in scripture:

“See, I am laying in Zion  
a stone, a cornerstone chosen and precious;  
and whoever believes in him will not be put to shame.”

To you then who believe, he is precious;  
but for those who do not believe,

“The stone that the builders rejected  
has become the very head of the corner,”  
and “A stone that makes them stumble,  
and a rock that makes them fall.”

They stumble because they disobey the word,  
as they were destined to do.

But you are a chosen race, a royal priesthood,  
a holy nation, God's own people,  
in order that you may proclaim the mighty acts of him  
who called you out of darkness into his marvellous light.

Once you were not a people,  
but now you are God's people;  
once you had not received mercy,  
but now you have received mercy.

## Our Experience

- What does it mean to be a parish?
- In what ways are we a parish community?
- Are there any called by God who would not feel 'at home' in our church?

# Read & Reflect

## GENERAL INSTRUCTION OF THE ROMAN MISSAL

95. In the celebration of Mass the faithful form a holy people, a people of God's own possession and a royal priesthood, so that they may give thanks to God and offer the unblemished sacrificial Victim not only by means of the hands of the Priest but also together with him and so that they may learn to offer their very selves. They should, moreover, take care to show this by their deep religious sense and their charity toward brothers and sisters who participate with them in the same celebration.

They are consequently to avoid any appearance of singularity or division, keeping in mind that they have only one Father in heaven and that hence are all brothers or sisters one to the other.

96. Moreover, they are to form one body, whether in hearing the Word of God, or in taking part in the prayers and in the singing, or above all by the common offering of the Sacrifice and by participating together at the Lord's table. This unity is beautifully apparent from the gestures and bodily postures observed together by the faithful.

97. The faithful, moreover, should not refuse to serve the People of God in gladness whenever they are asked to perform some particular service or function in the celebration.

## CELEBRATING THE MASS

22 Christ is always present in the Church, particularly in its liturgical celebrations. In the celebration of Mass, which is a memorial of the Sacrifice of the cross, Christ is really present first of all in the assembly itself: "Where two or three come together in my name, there am I in their midst" (Matthew 18:20). At Mass "the faithful form a holy people, a people whom God has made his own, a royal priesthood, so that they may give thanks to God and offer the spotless Victim not only through the hands of the priest but also together with him, and so that they may learn to offer themselves. They should, moreover, endeavour to make this clear by their deep religious sense and their

charity toward brothers and sisters who participate with them in the same celebration.”

139 In the Introductory Rites, Christ joins the Church to himself and gathers her children to join their voices to his perfect hymn of praise. Thus, the liturgical assembly, “where two or three come together in Christ’s name, and where he is found in their midst (cf. Mt 18:20), is the ‘first image that the Church gives of herself’”. Indeed the assembly itself is also the first instance of Christ’s presence in the liturgy

The purpose of the Introductory Rites is to ensure that the faithful, who come together as one, establish communion and dispose themselves to listen properly to God’s word and to celebrate the Eucharist worthily.

## For Discussion

- What does it mean to have been made ‘God’s own’ (cf. GIRM 95), a people ‘called together in Christ’ (cf. CTM 5)?
- As a group describe what happens between the beginning of Mass and the first reading and why we might do these things.
- What are the ways we express our unity in common prayer?

# Act

- When going to Mass next Sunday choose one of the following to do:  
Notice the ways in which people arrive at the church: in groups, singly, what forms of transport?  
Is there space for people to meet and greet?  
Do they make use of it?  
Is there anything to indicate this a welcoming community?  
Would someone of impaired mobility need help to enter the church?  
What else is going on in the neighbourhood?  
What sort of witness is this to the wider community?
- Before Mass begins choose one of the following to do:  
Be aware of the people gathering at Mass with you.  
Notice their diversity: the young, the old, families and single people, people of different races and cultures etc.  
Notice the different ways that people prepare themselves for Mass.  
Notice what other things are taking place in preparation for Mass.  
Consider the various circumstances that have brought us together at this place at this time for our common celebration.

# Prayer

Like the deer that yearns  
for running streams,  
so my soul is yearning  
for you, my God.

My soul is thirsting for God,  
the God of my life;  
when can I enter and see  
the face of God?

These things will I remember  
as I pour out my soul:  
how I would lead the rejoicing crowd  
into the house of God,  
amid cries of gladness and thanksgiving,  
the throng wild with joy.

Why are you cast down, my soul  
why groan within me?  
Hope in God; I will praise yet again,  
my saviour and my God.

O send forth your light and your truth;  
let these be my guide.  
Let them bring me to your holy mountain  
to the place where you dwell.

And I will come to the altar of God,  
the God of my joy.  
My redeemer, I will thank you on the harp,  
O God, my God.

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