LITURGY CLASS FOR 1st Communion Parents

**Wed. January 16, 2013 – Winneconne / Wed. February 26, 2014 – Omro - 6:00-7:00pm**

***(Order pamphlets for parents - “Why do we ‘have to’ go to Mass?” Our Sunday Visitor)***

**OUTLINE of class:**

**INTRODUCTION: what are we going to do tonight? Important to be good models for your**

**children. Talk about how parents are the primary teachers of their children.**

1. **WHAT** DO WE DO ON SUNDAY? What is Mass/Liturgy?

What have you seen or heard about?

Have the group think of a word with their neighbor and then say them out loud.

Work through sheet on WHAT IS LITURGY?

1. **WHY** DO WE DO ALL THOSE THINGS?

Hand out SIGNS of people of different ages who go to liturgy.

With your neighbor decide why do THEY go.

Walk through sheet on “Why do we go to liturgy?”

Move into purpose of liturgy.

**Why do people say Mass is BORING?**

1. WHY DO WE DO THESE THINGS **OVER & OVER AGAIN?**

Tell story of rabbi in the woods.

Meaning and power of ritual.

Share Ron Rolheiser’s article on ritual – fidelity and commitment.

Play DVD “Watching You” by Rodney Atkins

**Part 2**

1. Structure of the Mass

Hand out parts of the Mass to everyone. Give an overview of the four main parts of the Mass as

**2. Closing**

**Review what Mass is, why we come and how important it is to model this for our children.**

**1. What do we do on Sunday? What is Mass/Liturgy?**

*Taken from “The Many faces of Eucharist” (Ron Rolheiser 6-08)*

Liturgy is something we DESCRIBE - not define.

Liturgy is different things to each of us. WHY?

like church**, LIVING MYSTERY** - always more than we can say - can't be fully understood -eludes definition.

**VATICAN II describes rather than defines liturgy when it says**

**"SOURCE & SUMMIT OF THE CHRISTIAN LIFE" (CSL#10)**

**There are lots of views on what Liturgy/Mass is:**� For some **it is a meal**, for others it is a **sacrifice**

**EUCHARIST means to give praise and thanks to God**  
  
� For some it is a **ritual act**, sacred and set apart, for others it is a **community gathering**, the more mess and kids there the better.  
  
� For some it is a **deep personal prayer,** for others it is a **communal worship** for the world.   
  
� For some its very essence is a **coming together**, **a communion,** of those united in a single denominational faith, while for others part of its essence is its **reaching out,** its innate imperative to wash the feet of those who are different from ourselves.  
  
� For some it is a **celebration of sorrow**, a making present of Christ’s suffering and the thus place where we can break down, for others it is the **place to celebrate joy and sing alleluia**.  
  
� For some it is a **ritual remembrance**, a making present of the historical events of Jesus’ dying, rising, ascending, and sending the Holy Spirit, for others it is a **celebration of God�s presence with us** **today.**  
  
� For some it is a celebration of the Last Supper, **something to be done less frequently**, for others it is God’s daily feeding of his people with a new manna, Christ’s body, and is **something to be done every day.**  
� For some it is a **celebration of reconciliation**, a ritual that forgives and unites, for others unity and **reconciliation are pre-conditions for its proper celebration.**

� For some it is **understood to make present the real, physical body of Christ**, for others it is understood to make **Christ present in a real but spiritual way.**  
� Some call it **the Lord’s Supper**, others call it the **Eucharist,** others call it **the Mass or liturgy.**  
  
� Some **celebrate it once a year**, some celebrate it **four times a year**, some celebrate it every **Sunday,** and some celebrate it **every day.**  
**Who’s right?**

In truth, the Eucharist is ALL of these things, and more.

It is like a finely-cut diamond twirling in the sun,

every turn giving off a different sparkle.

It carries different layers of meaning,

How does one put this all together? That depends upon how one defines that.

Some early communities called it the Lord’s Supper, connected its meaning very much to the commemoration of the Last Supper, and celebrated it less frequently.

Whereas the apostolic community that formed around John connected its theology and practice very much to the concept of God feeding his people daily with manna and they celebrated it every day, given that we need sustenance daily.  
As well, we see some of its paradoxical elements right within its central symbols, bread and the wine:

Both are paradoxical: Bread is both is symbol of joy, togetherness, health, and achievement (the smell of fresh bread and the primal beauty of a loaf of bread) even as it is made up of broken kernels of wheat who had to be crushed in their individuality and be baked in fire to become that bread.

Wine is both a festive drink, the drink of celebration, of wedding, even as it is crushed grapes and represents the blood of Jesus and the blood and suffering of all that is crushed in our world and in our lives.

**The marvel of all of this lies in the richness of the Eucharist itself.**

There is no adequate explanation of the Eucharist for the same reason that,

in the end, there is no adequate explanation for love, for embrace,

and for the reception of life and spirit through touch.

**Certain realities take us beyond language because that is there very purpose**.

They do what words cannot do.

They also are beyond what we can neatly nail down in our understanding.   
  
And that is true of the Eucharist.

Any attempt to nail down its full meaning will forever come up short

because it will always eventually get up and walk away with the nail!  
  
Liturgy is a symbol of what we are and it is calling us to be that Body of Christ more fully.

**LITURGY IS THE CHURCH DOING WHAT IT NEEDS TO DO TO BE CHURCH.**

The Body of Christ is proclaiming itself to be the Body of Christ.

**2. Why do we do all these things?**

**ACTIVITY: Hand out SIGNS of people of different ages who go to liturgy.**

**Decide with neighbor WHY this person would go to Mass?**

**"God does not need liturgy. People do."** (EAW#4)

Cardinal Bernadin said, “It is not an option, nor merely an obligation, not a bonus but a need – like food and drink, like sleep and work, like friends.” (Bernadin, p.5 ***Guide for the Assmbly***)

**"God does not need liturgy. People do."** (EAW#4)

“We need to gather, listen, give praise and thanks, share communion.

Otherwise we forget who we are and whose we are;

we have neither the strength nor the joy to be Christ’s body present in today’s world.”

(Bernadin, p.5 ***Guide for the Assmbly***)

Our need to worship **FIRST** rises out of that God-given desire that is the creator's gift to us - regardless of our openness to it, God is always planting within us the desire to pray and offer worship.

SECOND - our need to worship is supported by that community of believers whose structure and faith announces that worship is our DUTY and OUR SALVATION.

(preface to Euch. prayer 2)

"It is our duty and our salvation, always and everywhere to give you thanks through your beloved Son, Jesus Christ."

Our salvation rests in praising and thanking God who has NO need of our praise and thanks.

**WHETHER WE FEEL IT OR NOT; WHETHER WE FEEL LIKE IT OR NOT.**

“**It is NOT important that liturgy makes us FEEL good – but it IS essential , however, that liturgy prepares us to DO good.” (Huck))**

We go to **practice** what it means to be a Christian.

“It is a regular rehearsal of a language of God’s presence and action in the world.

We speak it day after day and week after week until we learn it by heart…” Michael Witczak

This is why we worship: God made us, God loves us and God saves us.

TO PUT IT SIMPLY**:**

**"God has done a lot for us and we are in debt to God up to our ears."**

Jesus has paid the debt for us. "We owe a debt to God - and- we owe God for letting the debt be written off in the gift of Christ's life for us."

"How do we pay back a debt when the one we owe has canceled the debt? We don't because we can't but we OUGHT to be mighty thankful and filled with praise for the one we owe. And that's the way it is between God and us." (Fleming p. 10)

**"Worship feeds us, gives us a renewed faith and commitment to the Gospel, new courage to get outside and do the job of Christians in the world.”** (Eugene Walsh)

**SO why do so many people say that don’t go because “Mass is boring?”**

Dictionary says the word BORE means “to make weary by being dull, repetitive or tedious.

Let’s look at that definition a bit more closely.

**REPETITIVE.** We all know liturgy is repetitive.

It’s the nature of the beast because it is ritual.

Yet we all know the after Vat. II the mass is amazingly varied within its ritual.

Different readings, prayers, songs homily, intercessions.

I always make the comparision with football when I talk to folks. Because I think FOOTBALL is boring… Same players, same rules, same plays – maybe in different order.

What is amazing to me is that someone learning to play **football, or any baseball** or any sport will practice for hours perfecting a play or a pitch

and if you ask them if they are BORED they will say,

“no way---I’m getting ready for the game.”

Same thing with someone who likes **to play the piano**.

They may practice the same piece for HOURS, sometimes even repeating a single measure twenty time and if you ask them if they are bored they say “No, I love the piano.”

**These people REPEAT and REPEAT but they don’t get weary. WHY NOT?**

**BECAUSE THEY ARE COMMITTED, INVESTED, because they can see the result.**

So it not about the repetitiveness itself but more about the COMMITMENT, and INVESTMENT and knowing why we’re doing it.

Without that the boredom, the weariness with repetition comes in.”

So why do we go to Mass over and over again?

Why do we repeat these words, these actions, day after day, week after week?

Let’s go back to sporting example.

Baseball players practice batting hour after hour in order to perfect their stroke,

so that when they come to the place in a game situation they can respond to the pitch thrown and get on base,

advance the runner,

score a run, win the game.

Their ability to contribute to the outcome of the game is rooted in the hours of repetitive behavior that allowed them to apply their **MUSCLES’ MEMORY** to this situation.

Same thing for piano players.

They spend hours practicing so they build up that MUSCLE MEMORY

and their fingers just seem to move without thinking.

**MASS IS THE SAME KIND OF TASK.**

“It is a regular rehearsal of a language of God’s presence and action in the world.

We speak it day after day and week after week until we learn it by heart…

NOT mindless repetition but “knowing by heart.

Then when life catches up to us, in happy times (births, marriages, graduations

and in sad (sickness, death, flood, divorce.)

**we have a vocabulary that helps us express who we are and what we feel.**

We have a context into which we can place the event and find support and meaning.

We find ourselves within a history that assures us that God is present and acting.

We find ourselves with a community that surrounds and supports us.

WE find ourselves doing things that nourish and strengthen us.” Michael Witczak

**And we do ALL of that as a TOGETHER.**

We can’t search, we can’t travel, we can’t find our way ALONE.

We need one another and that’s why we “come to church.”

We aren’t walking this journey, aren’t on this search alone.

Alone, we lose our way, get discouraged and may even give up.

We need the wisdom and support **of each other.**

We need the prayers and encouragement of those around us.

There’s more than just a group of people at Mass when all of us sing together

or listen to the Scriptures together or say, “Lord, hear our prayer.”

We are a CARAVAN.

**We are a church.**

We listen together. We pray together.

We are strengthened and comforted by each other.

This is the way we travel as Catholic Christians – **together.**

**In the 3rd Eucharistic prayer we read:**

**"You never cease to gather a people to yourself so that from the rising of the sun to its setting a pure sacrifice may be offered to your name.”**

God has called us together - mysterious reason - not perfect or better but called us together -

In the Acts we see that the life of the apostles is sustained IN GATHERING and is basic dynamic is toward unity that they may be one.

**WE GO TO LITURGY BECAUSE IT IS MEANS AND EXPRESSION OF THAT UNITY.**

**Here’s another way to look at the Mass.**

If you were tired, stressed out, feeling sad, lonely or troubled and you lived near the ocean,

you could go on the beach and just spend time LOOKING at the waves,

hearing them crash again and again on the shore.

Like most people, you would probably find this experience calming, peaceful and refreshing.

You would leave that ocean feeling much better about life.

Yet the motion of the sea and the crashing of the waves

is something REPEATED over and over again.

Every time you GO TO THE BEACH, it’s the same thing.

**That is the STRENGTH of the Mass.**

It’s a ritual that you CAN DEPEND ON.

It’s always there.

It’s always pretty much the same.

In our busy lives, where we are constantly struggling with change,

we know that when we attend Mass there will be the constant flow of song and silence, of standing and sitting, of praying and reflecting.

Like the ocean, this aspect of the Mass can become,

over time, a source of peace and refreshment.

**Why Go To Church?**

A Church goer wrote a letter to the editor of a newspaper and complained that it made no sense to go to church every Sunday. “I’ve gone for 30 years now,” he wrote, “and in that time I have heard something like 3,000 sermons. But for the life of me, I can’t remember a single one of them. So, I think I’m wasting my time and the pastors are wasting theirs by giving sermons at all.”

This started a real controversy in the “Letters to the Editor” column, much to the delight of the editor. It went on for weeks until someone wrote this clincher:

“I’ve been married for 30 years now. In that time my wife has cooked some 32,000 meals. But, for the life of me, I cannot recall the entire menu for a single one of those meals. But I do know this…They all nourished me and gave me the strength I needed to do my work. If my wife had not given me these meals, I would be physically dead today. Likewise, if I had not gone to church for nourishment, I would be spiritually dead today!”

When you are DOWN to nothing…God is UP to something! Faith sees the invisible, believes the incredible and receives the impossible!

Thank God for our physical AND our spiritual nourishment!

When Satan is knocking at your door, simply say, “Jesus, could you get that for me?!!”

**WE GO TO LITURGY BECAUSE IT IS MEANS AND EXPRESSION OF THAT UNITY.**

**What is the purpose of Liturgy/ Mass?**

Purpose is to turn you and me into the reality celebrated.

**To change you and me into Christ.**

not only bread and wine are transformed but **WE** are. We are to be food for others.

**TAFT**: The purpose of liturgy is to "reproduce in our lives what the church exemplifies for us in its public worship. In other words to reproduce in our lives the life of Jesus."

**We don't celebrate liturgy to REMEMBER Jesus but to BECOME Him.**

We are to become other Christ’s - to build up the body of Christ and to become nourishment for the world.

1. **Why do we do these things OVER and OVER again?**

**WHAT IS RITUAL? - Ritual is the shaping and measuring of our lives.**

**Tells us who we are and who we belong to.**

**Like family rituals they are powerful way of being who you are and participating in it.**

Once upon a time there was a rabbi.

Whenever he wanted God’s presence,

he went to a special PLACE in the woods, lit a FIRE,

said some PRAYERS, and did a DANCE.

Then God would appear to him.

When the rabbi died, his disciple did the same.

If he wanted God’s presence,

he went to the same PLACE in the woods,

lit the FIRE,

and said the same PRAYERS.

**Nobody had taught him the DANCE, but it still worked.**

GOD APPEARED.

The next disciple carried on the tradition.

Although he DIDN’T know the PRAYERS,

NOR the DANCE,

he went to the same PLACE in the woods

and lit the FIRE.,

GOD CAME.

Eventually a disciple came along

who DIDN’T know how to light the fire or say the prayers or do the dance.

He search for the place in the woods, but COULDN’T find it!

All he knew was how to tell the STORY. But it worked.

He discovered that whenever he told the story of how the others had found God,

**GOD WOULD APPEAR.**

Ritual is best understood through metaphor, through story, as with this tale I just told.

**GOD APPEARS whenever certain stories get told.**

**When we ritually tell the story of Jesus’ sacrifice**

**(in the Eucharistic prayer, the very heart of liturgy) JESUS COMES!**

That’s what we believe happens at Mass: JESUS COMES!

We experience the “real presence” of the even of Christ’s dying and rising.

Moreover, that reality is given to us so that we might participate in it.

We die to the things that divide us and become the body and blood of Christ.

**The Sustaining Power of Ritual Ron Rolheiser 2010-07-11**

Never travel with anyone who expects you to be interesting all the time. On a long trip there are bound to be some boring stretches. That's an axiom offered by Daniel Berrigan in his Commandments for the Long Haul and it contains a wisdom that is often absent today in our marriages, our family lives, our friendships, our churches, and our spiritual lives.   
  
Today we often crucify others and ourselves with the impossible notion

that inside of our relationships,

our families, our churches, and prayer lives

we are meant to be alert, attentive, enthusiastic,

and emotionally present **all the time**.

We are never given permission to be distracted, bored,

and anxious to move on to something else

because we are weighed down with the pressures

and tiredness of our own lives.

We lay guilt on each other and on ourselves with these kinds of judgments:

Sometimes you're too distracted and tired to really hear me!

You're not really present to this meal!

You're bored at church!

You're anxious to get this over with!

You don't love me like you did at first!

You're heart isn't in this as it used to be!  
  
While there is a healthy challenge in these judgments,

they also betray a naiveté and lack of understanding

of what actually sustains us in our daily lives.

**We've gone ritually tone-deaf.**

(We need to learn what REALLY sustains us in our daily lives.

We forget about the power of Ritual we just talked about.)

**WHAT DO I MEAN BY THAT? HERE'S AN EXAMPLE:**

A recent study on marriage points out that couples

who make it a habit to give each other a ritual embrace or kiss

before leaving the house in the morning

and another ritual embrace or kiss before retiring at night fare better

than those who let this gesture be determined

by simple spontaneity or mood.

The study makes the point that even if the ritual kiss is done

in a distracted, hurried, perfunctory, or duty-bound way

it still serves a very important function,

namely, it speaks of **fidelity and commitment**

beyond the ups and downs of our emotions, distractions, and tiredness on a given day.

**It is a ritual, an act that is done regularly**

**to precisely say what our hearts and heads cannot always say,**

**namely, that the deepest part of us REMAINS** **COMMITTED**

**even during those times when we are too tired, too distracted,**

**too angry, too bored, too anxious, too self-preoccupied,**

**or too emotionally or intellectually unfaithful**

**to be as attentive and present as we should be.**

It says that we still love the other and remain committed despite the inevitable changes and pressures that the seasons bring.  
  
This is often not understood today.

An over-idealization of love, family, church,

and prayer often crucifies the reality.

Popular culture would have us believe that love should be romantic, exciting,

and interesting all the time,

and that lack of felt emotion is a signal that something is wrong.

Liturgists and prayer leaders would have us believe that **every church** **service**

needs to be full of enthusiasm and emotion

and that there is something wrong with us when we find ourselves flat, bored,

looking at our wristwatches,

and resisting emotional engagement during church or prayer.

Everywhere we are warned about the dangers of doing something

simply because it is duty,

that there is something wrong when the movements of love, prayer,

or service become routine.

**Why do something if your heart isn't in it?**  
Again, there is something legitimate in these warnings:

Duty and commitment without heart will not ultimately sustain themselves. However, with that being admitted,

it is important to recognize and name the fact that any relationship in love, family, church, or prayer can only sustain itself over a long period

through ritual and routine.

**Ritual sustains the heart, not vice versa.**  
It's fidelity to the routine of everyday life, not a honeymoon,

that ultimately sustains a marriage.

It's fidelity to simply being at the weekday meal,

simple fare eaten quickly and distractedly,

not the huge celebration or banquet, **that sustains family life.**

A family that demands that every meal together be an event

where everyone affectively engages

and insists that the pressures of time and personal agenda

should be of no concern soon enough notices

that more and more family members are finding excuses not to be there.

**And for good reason: Nobody has energy for a banquet every day.**

Indeed, nobody, except God, is immune to the simple tiredness, distraction, affective promiscuity, and self-preoccupation

that can make it difficult for the heart to be alert, attentive,

and emotionally present at any given time.

**Love is shown in decision. It’s a CHOICE we make.**  
The same holds true for prayer.

Anyone who prays only when she can affectively bring along her heart

and soul will not sustain prayer for long.

**But the habit of prayer, the ritual,**

**simple fidelity to the act,**

showing up to do it irrespective of feelings and mood,

can sustain **prayer for a lifetime**

and reign in the roaming of the head and heart.  
  
**Repetition,** says Soren Kierkegaard**, is our daily bread.**

**SHOW DVD – “Watching You” by Rodney Atkins**

**MOVE INTO PART 2**

**STRUCTURE OF THE MASS – put parts of the Mass together.**

**CLOSING**

**Review what Mass is, why we come and how important it is to MODEL this for our children.**

**TEACH YOUR CHIILDREN –**

This was a VERY QUICK look at our liturgy – this time of gathering to give praise and thanks to God.

Remember liturgy is something we DO – we CELEBRATE

And the more we share in this Body of Christ the more we become that Body of Christ we already are.

All of these things we do here have something to do with LIFE!

It has to make a difference in our lives.

You have to know what you are doing here.

Remember liturgy prepares us to DO good.

we are called to speak up and sing out and pay attention and gather round.

This is HOW we do liturgy.

Remember any relationship in family, in love, in church can only sustain itself over a long period through RITUAL and ROUTINE. **It’s FIDELITY to the routine and ritual**

--of marriage that sustains it.

-of family life that sustains it

-of church that sustains it. – simply SHOWING UP for Mass

Regardless of our feeling or mood, can sustain prayer for a lifetime.

**You need to model that for your children**

Others should know by watching you that this celebration is important to you.

Your children are WATCHING you, LISTENING to you.

Don’t doubt that for a minute.

**If you don’t model what it means to be church, if you aren’t faithful,**

**your children will grow up WITHOUT the rituals that will sustain them**

**when they need it in life.**

This liturgy is the work of the church.

This is what gives us strength,

This is what nourishes us.

**THIS LITURGY IS WHAT CONTINUES TO TRANSFORM US**

**INTO THE BODY OF CHRIST**

**SO THAT WE CAN BE NOURISHMENT FOR THE WORLD!!**

**EQUIPMENT NEEDED**

Missalettes for everyone

Bible

Signs with age groups for “Why do we go to liturgy?”

Sign with parts of the Mass to put in order

Computer, projector for DVD “Watching You”