



We Gather with Love and Respect

Last week we spoke of gathering to worship as the Body of Christ. We come from all directions and from all different experiences of the past week. We even come from all experiences of the past few hours! Some have had the opportunity to arise leisurely, sit for a few minutes with their tea or coffee, perhaps even having the time to reflect and prepare for gathering with the community to raise mind and heart in communal prayer. Others are pulling children from bed, rotating through the shower, trying to get breakfast on the table (forget that cup of coffee!), and raising their voices to get everyone in the car so as not to be late. Yet again, there might be some whose hearts are so heavy that it takes all their strength just to approach the church. Yet, we are the Body of Christ, and as we enter the communal gathering space, we all bring our hopes, cares, thanksgivings, yearnings, our joys, our sorrows, our peacefulness, and our pain. We gather to worship, to renew, and to be nourished so we may go forth to carry the gospel into the world once again.

As we greet one another, we remember that we are gathered for *communal* worship! This is not a time for personal prayer but it is a deeply personal experience. We honor one another by our hospitality toward one another. We share hymnals. We share space in the pews. We join our voices together in prayer and song. We lift our minds and hearts together in petition and prayer. We are community. We are one.

How do we show reverence for God and charity to our fellow worshippers? Even as meet our friends and catch up on old news, let us be sensitive to the needs of those who desire a moment of recollection or quiet before the Mass starts. Today's technology should be left at the door. Cell phones with the constant "on" sometimes distracts us with ringing, twitter or text messages. They intrude on our worship, our time as community, our time with Christ. It is a sign of respect to turn off the cell phone – the messages can wait. Arriving on time so that we are not jumping over those already praying or listening is a sign of respect for fellow worshippers. Should we come late (there are usually good reasons), let us wait until the Scripture reading is over, then look for a seat. This is one way we

show our concern for the presence of Christ both in his Word and in the assembly. In his article in Catholic Update entitled "To Participate More Actively in the Mass" Fr. Thomas Richstatter addresses an issue we are well aware of: "Some members of the parish community may not be old enough to actively help create this silence, and the parish must provide ways for them to hear the Word according to their capacity, and also provide ways which enable their parents to hear the Word and be moved by it."

At St. John Vianney, we provide children at the 9:00 o'clock Mass the opportunity to listen to the Word with other children with the facilitation of a capable catechist. In case the children are not old enough to go out with the other children, we invite the parents to be sensitive to the needs of other worshippers. We encourage parents of children who are restless to take them to the vestibule and see if that helps to calm them. We have discovered that the plaza between the church and Mullen Commons is not only good for children to run around but also for parents to listen to what is going on at Mass since in the plaza one can hear everything said at Mass.

Let's honor one another, honor the ministers of hospitality, the ministers of the Word, the ministers of music, the ministers of service at the table and Eucharist, and the presider. Christ is present in the community – let us honor Him and one another. Christ is present in the Word – let us listen with open hearts and respect. Christ is present in the presider – let us join our prayer with him as we do this in remembrance of the first sharing of Eucharist. Christ is present in the Eucharist itself – let us feed and be nourished as we go forth to be Christ in the world.

We gather as the people of God. As "The Song of the Body of Christ" (us!) says: "We come to share our story, we come to break the bread, we come to know our rising from the dead. We come as your people, we come as your own, united with each other, love finds a home."



Amen!