

# Our Liturgical Spirituality

By Kristopher W. Seaman

More than sixty people gathered in the day chapel of a parish up the road from where I ministered. I was their seventh speaker, as they had been gathering for over two months. Standing before them after giving a presentation on the Sacrament of Penance, I asked if there were any questions. A gentleman inquired, “Who is this ‘Jesus’ you keep mentioning?” After the initial shock of the question, I asked myself: how do I respond *briefly* to his question? A second hand went up, she likewise asked, “Yeah, who is this ‘Jesus’?” I then asked the entire group of inquirers, those seeking more knowledge about Christianity in general and Catholicism in particular as part of the Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults, “How many people are wondering who Jesus is?” Over a third of the hands went up. So, instead of breaking them into small groups to reflect on the Sacrament of Penance, I began to tell them that we come to know not only *about* Jesus, but who Jesus *is* especially during liturgy, as well as in daily life as we encounter other human persons and in the events that speak of God’s love and graciousness.

The principal focus of liturgy is the life of Christ, the one sent by God to bring salvation (which comes from *salvus*, meaning healing) to all of God’s people. We come to know who Christ is through the liturgy. Pope Francis expresses this well: “Jesus’ whole life, his way of dealing with the poor, his actions, his integrity, his simple daily acts of generosity, and finally his complete self-giving, is precious and reveals the mystery of his divine life” (*The Joy of the Gospel*, 265). When the Scriptures are proclaimed during the liturgy, it is, as the *Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy* states, Christ who speaks (article 7). Christ is present in his proclaimed Word, inviting us to know him and his mission for us. We also come to know



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Christ in the very symbols of liturgy: bread transformed into Christ’s Body, wine turned into Christ’s Blood, water blessed, and so forth. The prayers, songs, gestures, all communicate who Christ is in our midst, and his desires for us. Christ’s life is larger than any one liturgical service could convey. Rather, the power of the liturgical year is that we enter into “moments” or specific events within Christ’s life or that these events of Christ enter into us, through our hearing, through our communing, through our singing, and through our praying. For example, at Christmas we come to know of the Son of God who became human and dwells in our midst, who enters into us

through his words and his Eucharist. At Easter we come to know that God will bring life out of death, pain, and betrayal. Over the course of the liturgical year, we grow in not only knowledge of Christ, but we grow more Christlike. And to know what Christ is like is principally through liturgy. He models for us God’s very desires for us.

Once we begin to grow in our knowledge of Christ over the course of the liturgical year, when we celebrate the liturgical seasons and feast days, we begin to develop a liturgical spirituality. Pope Francis alludes to this type of spirituality: “Christ’s resurrection is not an event of the past; it contains a vital power which has permeated this world. Where all seems to be dead, signs of the resurrection suddenly spring up. It is an irresistible force” (*The Joy of the Gospel*, 276). Because of Christ’s Resurrection, and his presence to us in the liturgy through the power of the Holy Spirit, Christ’s entire life, his mission, begins to take hold of us. This fruit of transformation begins to allow us to see and act how God desires us to on a daily basis.