

LOOKING THROUGH STAINED GLASS



A Column by Fr. Tom

The Mass, Part 4 - What Happens When We All Work Together

Last week, we explored why the Mass is important to the life of the Church and to our lives. We also discussed why we should *go to* Mass. However, as good as it is to go to Mass, we are actually called to do more - we are called *to participate* in the Mass.

In *Sacrosanctum Concilium*, the *Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy* from Vatican II, "Mother Church earnestly desires that all the faithful should be led to that *fully conscious, and active participation in liturgical celebrations* which is demanded by the very nature of the liturgy. Such participation by the Christian people as 'a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a redeemed people'

(1 Pet. 2:9; cf. 2:4-5), is *their right and duty by reason of their baptism.*" [SC 14, emphasis added]

As we discussed in our column on the Sacrament of Baptism, we are called from our baptism to be priests, prophets and kings. [cf. *Stained Glass*, July 22, "I Baptize You Priest, Prophet and King"]

Through the common **priesthood** of the faithful, we are called to join with the rest of the community in prayer, especially during the Mass.

From this common priesthood, some are called to special participation in the Mass. There are some who are called to ordained ministry [bishops, priests and deacons], who share, in different degrees, in the ministerial priesthood of Jesus Christ. These men are called to specific roles within the Mass. As we discussed last week and in previous columns, the priest represents the person of Christ during the Mass. Therefore, he presides at our celebration and is thus properly called the celebrant. Also, he prays all of the presidential prayers, especially the Eucharistic prayer which effects the transubstantiation of the

bread and wine into the Body and Blood of Jesus. In addition, he usually preaches the homily on the readings. The deacon has a special role in the Mass as well. He assists the priest, proclaims the Gospel, and may preach the homily.

One of the great changes that grew from the changes of Vatican II is increased participation of the laity in the Mass, based on their common priesthood mentioned above. Now, we have many more women and men involved in the Mass, including Readers, Extraordinary Ministers of Holy Communion, and Altar Servers. These were all roles that were previously reserved for the ordained, or those who were officially installed in these roles and on their way toward ordination. In addition, there are other members of the congregation who are involved in special roles that support the liturgy, such as Musicians, Sacristans and Ushers.

Finally, through the common priesthood of the faithful, *all of us* have a "right and duty" to participate in the Mass, as discussed in the quote above from *Sacrosanctum Concilium*. We are called to respond to the dialogues during the Mass. (e.g. When the celebrant says, "The Lord be with you," we respond "And with your Spirit.") We should also participate in praying the common prayers of the Mass, such as the Our Father and the Gloria, and join in singing the hymns. These are just some of the ways that everyone can actively participate in the Mass.

Next week, we will take a more in-depth look at how we actively participate in the Mass with our bodies, as well as our voices.

