**Lesson 8: The Liturgy of the Word, Part II**

The Liturgy of the Word is a dialogue in which God speaks to us in the readings and we, his people, listen attentively and respond in song and prayer. It has a structure which finds its highpoint in the proclamation of the Gospel, when Christ himself speaks to his people. As the account of the words and deeds of Christ himself, the Gospel is heralded by the candle procession with the Book of the Gospels from the altar to the ambo as the congregation stands. It is held high by the priest or deacon while everyone sings the Alleluia or Gospel Acclamation and verse during Lent, acclaiming the works of the Lord. Finally, at the conclusion of the Gospel reading, it is acclaimed as “The Gospel of the Lord” with the faithful responding, “Praise to you, Lord Jesus Christ.” The Book is reverenced with a kiss by the priest or deacon.[[1]](#endnote-1)

The reading of the Gospel is followed by the homily, preached by the celebrating Bishop or Priest, or on occasion, by the Deacon. The purpose of the homily is to “break open” the Word for the gathered assembly, helping them to make the Word their own and to apply it to their striving for God in their daily lives, with all their joys and sorrows. A period of silent reflection concludes the homily, once again allowing time for the Holy Spirit to speak to the hearts of the faithful.[[2]](#endnote-2)

In Masses celebrated on Sundays and on other days of special significance called “Solemnities”, and on feasts of the Lord which fall on a Sunday, the assembly stands and recites the Profession of Faith, a ringing affirmation of our common belief in the truths that unite us as one Body in Christ. The Creed most often used is the Niceno-Constantinopolitan Creed which was formulated at the Councils of Nicaea and Constantinople in the fourth century.[[3]](#endnote-3)

The Liturgy of the Word concludes with the Prayer of the Faithful, in which we ask God that what has been proclaimed in the readings, explained in the homily, and in which we have professed our faith, may become a reality in us and in our world. The Prayer of the Faithful is an ancient prayer form in which the faithful exercise their baptismal call and responsibility to pray for others.[[4]](#endnote-4)

At the beginning of this prayer, the priest briefly invites all present to pray. Intentions are then announced by the deacon or a lector and those gathered respond with a petition such as “Lord, hear our prayer” to each intention. In these intentions, the local Church prays for the needs of the world, for the universal Church, for all those who are sick or who suffer, and for its own needs. Also called the Universal Prayer, the Prayer of the Faithful is a sign of the ties binding close together all members of Christ’s Body throughout the world. The concluding prayer, prayed by the Priest, gathers together all the intentions, presenting them to the Father and asking, through the Holy Spirit, that they be granted in the name of Jesus in whose name all Christian prayer is made.[[5]](#endnote-5)

1. Sr. Janet Baxendale, SC, *A Walk through the Mass,* p. 8, taken from “Become One Body, One Spirit in Christ” CD resource (International Committee on English in the Liturgy, Inc. 2010). [↑](#endnote-ref-1)
2. Ibid. [↑](#endnote-ref-2)
3. Ibid. [↑](#endnote-ref-3)
4. Ibid, p. 9. [↑](#endnote-ref-4)
5. Ibid. [↑](#endnote-ref-5)