

Dear Friends,

Continuing the series on the Characteristics of an Evangelizing Parish, I would like to speak to the understanding that **“An Evangelizing Parish celebrates reverent and faith-filled Liturgies.”**

Last night at the Liturgy Committee meeting, I had a conversation with someone who spoke about the fact that there is so much noise before Mass, and that noise disturbs the prayers of the people. Yes, it is true that prior to the Mass we all need an opportunity to settle in for the liturgy. We need to take time to quietly reflect upon what we are doing and why we are at Mass. It is also true that this quiet time can help lift us out of frustrations at home or other difficulties we might be facing. It is important that we try to respect the needs of other people who want silence.

My question is this: are all distractions deliberately irreverent or disrespectful? We have people greeting parishioners at the door. Is that hospitality irreverent or disrespectful? Are all conversations before Mass really all that unkind when they are, perhaps, moments to share compassion, joy, and real love? Sometimes I am the one going around the church before Mass starts, to visit with people I care about. A lot of times these people have experienced profound tragedy, sickness, and real pain, and those few moments before Mass are the only time I have to visit with them. I do visit the sick in the hospitals, I do go to homes when people are dying, and grieving, but when I see their family members at Mass, I like to visit with them. Is that disrespectful or irreverent? In other words, rather than complain about the lack of silence, we need to realize that some of these distractions are actually real Christianity taking place.

Reverent and faith-filled liturgies are not the ones that are most pleasing to us personally, but rather the ones in which we decide we are going to participate fully, consciously, and enthusiastically in the Mass. An irreverent Mass is one in which people do not sing. A Mass that lacks faith is one that is filled with complaints. An irreverent and faith-less Mass is one in which we are overly disappointed because we have taken too personally those things that we didn't like about it.

A reverent and faith-filled Mass is one that will lead us to live Christ-like lives in the world. It will inspire us to be merciful and forgiving, tolerant and accepting of others. It will embolden us to share our faith, even when others don't want to hear about it. It will enable us to show deep compassion for others who are suffering. We will choose to share the Bread of Life with a hungry world.

I believe we have reverent and faith-filled liturgies here at St. Catherine of Genoa Parish. I care deeply about what I am doing. One of the greatest demons I have, though, is that I wear all my emotions on my sleeve, and I absolutely hate that about myself.

Not too long ago, I was talking about this with my spiritual director. I mentioned that I struggle with certain things that don't go the way I want them to. She said, **“So, are they disturbing your Mass?”** That question smacked me right between the eyes. It isn't “my mass.” I am not, nor have I ever been, at Mass for myself. We are all in this with and for each other. When we show that we are reverent to each other, and when our faith-filled lives are shared with each other, then we have liturgies that proclaim a joyful message. The Mass becomes a profound beacon of light to the community; a message that says, “See how they love one another.”

In joyful hope,

Fr. Tim Seigel