

**THE 2ND ANNUAL SOUTHEASTERN
LITURGICAL MUSIC SYMPOSIUM
OUR LADY OF THE ASSUMPTION CATHOLIC CHURCH**

**22 AUGUST 2009
THE QUEENSHIP OF THE BLESSED VIRGIN MARY**

**“NOT TO US LORD, NOT TO US,
BUT TO YOUR NAME GIVE THE GLORY!”**

My dear sisters and brothers in the Lord:

We are gathered here to celebrate once again what we do best as Roman Catholics and that is to celebrate the liturgy. While it is true that the Roman Catholic Church is best known through the charitable work that is done on behalf of others as well as through the various means of education and social programs that touch the lives of countless millions on a daily basis; I am sure that you could agree with me that the actual public face of the Church is the celebration of the Sacred Mysteries within that word and mystery that we know as Liturgy!

When I was a seminarian at St. Mary's Seminary & University in Baltimore, our Liturgy Professor made the comment to our class - when he was challenged by an over-zealous seminarian about an observation that the priest had made – is that “everyone thinks that they are a Liturgist!” My class and the seminarians at St. Mary's were the most pre-eminent Liturgists that walked the shores of these United States of America! As a matter of fact, the way that OUR Diocese or OUR Parish or OUR Pastor celebrated the Liturgy was, after all, the ONLY way the Eucharist, Baptism, Confirmation, Anointing of the Sick & Marriage was truly MEANT to be done was the way WE did it back home.

There is nothing like having pride for where you come from. After all, your family-of-origin contributes in your outlook on life. However, any Sociologist will also tell you that all of our family-of-origin identities also have issues! Therefore, the personality of the person who celebrates the Liturgy has a part to play in it, but it is not the end all and be all of the event.

In the Gospel of John, Chapter 3, verse 30 – John says this

about Jesus: ***“He must increase, I must decrease.”*** Think about those words and then you will feel the impact of the meaning of the messenger. Now, apply that same phrase to our lives and ministry in preparing for and celebrating the Liturgy of the Church.

A major problem within any religious denomination is that we all begin to think that this God-movement cannot go on without us. While we are created and we are essential to being the vessels that are used to exhibit God’s glory, what we celebrate, what we sing, what we proclaim and what we do is not about our exaltation so people can know our names – all we do in worship is for the greater glory of Almighty God! While we all have a role to play in the Body of Christ, we are called to be humble servants of the Mysteries that we celebrate, hold, proclaim and consume.

Too often I hear on a continual basis about clergy, religious and members of the lay faithful who actually think that the celebration of the Sacraments are all about them. Don’t you know – like my good friend Father Ray Harris of the Archdiocese of Baltimore said at the First Mass of

Thanksgiving of Josephite Father Sidney Oscar Speaks, SSJ – that if we don't act right and give God the intended praise and thanks that He calls for, ***“He will make these rocks, this floor, these walls, this very structure – exclaim and proclaim that He is our all and all? Amen pew? Amen walls? Amen floor? Amen roof? Amen Sanctuary?”***

As ministers, we are called to SERVE the Liturgical traditions of the Church and make certain that we are not the ones being glorified or even putting ourselves in the position to receive such praise. Psalm 115 says clearly:

“Not to us, LORD, not to us but to your name give glory because of your faithfulness and love.”

What better an example than the Blessed Virgin Mary, whose feast we celebrate today, of one who truly knew the power of God in her own life. Mary was a living example of what we as liturgical planners, movers & shakers should be all about. Her last words recorded in the Gospel of John, Chapter 2: Verse 5: at the Wedding Feast in Cana are as relevant & profound then as they are now:

“Do whatever He tells you.”

The good and humble example of Mary illustrates to all of us the mentality and the dependency that we all must have with God. Remember, we are the creatures; He is the Creator. The celebration of the Sacraments are those grace-filled times for all of us to truly be grateful for the various ways that the Lord “Incarnates” Himself into our lives and challenges once again.

Good Liturgy reminds the people we serve as well as ourselves that we are not afraid to be totally available and dependent to God’s Will for all of us. The celebration of the Mass, which is the context and the opportunity that we all encounter Liturgy at its best, is an opportunity of grace, transformation and conformity to the purpose and plan that God has for all of us in life.

The hymns that are sung are not supposed to exult us, but they are to speak of a story – a love story – a story of struggle, a story that relates that we are a redeemed people who daily

come from slavery to freedom. Our readings are to be proclaimed so that Lectors are not reading an article from Time magazine or an article from the New York Times – rather, our Lectors are to imitate what they hold in their hands – the Word of God! In the same way that prophets, evangelists and apostles inspired others by their witness – the Lector is not the teacher on Ferris Bueller’s Day Off – **“Mister Bueller...Mister Bueller.....Mister Bueller.....”**

No matter what our ministry may be we are called to use every ounce of energy, every drop of blood and every inch of life that we have to make the mystery and the reality of Jesus the Christ present within our own world. Our mission in our worship is to celebrate the mystery of God’s love for us in spirit and truth.

Because we are servants of the Liturgy of the Church & inspired by the love and the relationship of the Blessed Trinity, we can understand fuller the call to humbly present ourselves to our Heavenly Father and to the Church as people who serve the needs of the people in the pews who are looking for a reason to keep on keepin’ on. They are looking for

inspiration, hope and strength. This is not a time for the presider, for the deacon, for the choir, for the lectors, for the extraordinary ministers of Holy Communion, for the ministers of hospitality to use this as a time to exult themselves. This is a time for us to give our people a reason to praise Him in the good seasons and in the bad seasons.

Liturgy is truly the work of the people because everything we bring to the Lord's table whenever we enter into His Sanctuary is a time to know that He is indeed on our side and we need to pray that we remain on His side!

So as we begin this Symposium today we must pray that we can bring into reality the words of Psalm 115:

“Not to us, LORD, not to us but to your name give glory....”