

# Mass Parts 15/52: ***Gospel***



The first noticeable difference between the Gospel and the previous readings is that we stand up to listen. We show our respect and reverence for this special part of the Scriptures by standing and focusing. There is even a special song to prepare us to listen to the Gospels: the Alleluia. The word “Alleluia” is an attempt to write out the sound of joy and praise that has been coming from the human heart for thousands of years. Think of the ululation of Middle Eastern peoples, the rapid tongue noises at times of joy and of mourning. This can be written out as “le-lu-le-lu.” By adding breathing sounds before and after, we would roughly have “a-le-lu-a,” or alleluia. It is an expression of great praise and belief. So connected with praise and joy is it that we do not sing it at all during Lent.

So what are we supposed to do with our hands at the beginning of the Gospel? What are the little crosses people are making? It started with what the deacon/priest is doing. In the book from which we read, there is always a red cross at the beginning of each Gospel. This rubric (Latin for “red”) reminds the proclaimer to do the introduction with the cross. When we say the words “A Reading from the Holy Gospel according to...” we make the sign of the cross with our thumb on the written words themselves. Then we cross ourselves with just our thumb three times. With time and history, the congregation saw this and also began to make these three crossings. The prayers are different though during these crossings. The proclaimer of the Gospel, before reading, (this is the prayer you may see me saying while bowing to the altar before I come over to proclaim the Gospel), bows to the altar and prays: “Cleanse my heart and my lips, almighty God, that I may worthily proclaim your Holy Gospel.” If a deacon is proclaiming the Gospel, he first bows to the priest and asks “Your blessing, Father.” The priest blesses the deacon with the words: “May the Lord be in your heart and on your lips, that you may proclaim his Gospel worthily and well, in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.” I would receive the same blessing only if I was concelebrating with a bishop.

The people make a small sign of the cross with just their thumbs on their forehead, on their lips, and over their heart, while saying: “May the Lord (or the Words of the Gospel) be in my mind, on my lips, and in my heart.” There is no exact given prayer here, but this is the meaning of the crosses.

At the end of the proclamation, after inviting the congregation to praise with the words: “The Gospel of the Lord,” the Gospel proclaimer then actually kisses the words of the Gospel and prays: “Through the words of the Gospel may our sins be wiped away.”

*-Fr. Kopp*

Next Week: Homily