



HOPE

IN THE FUTURE

LIVING THE SUNDAY EUCHARIST



8th December 2019

2nd Sunday of Advent

Sunday Mass has been called “The shop window of the Parish”. It is the central moment when we gather together to meet Jesus in each other, in the Word and in the Sacrament of his Body and Blood. It is the “source and summit” of our Christian lives—the place where we can bring all our experiences of life to God, and be nourished and filled for the journey of the coming week. In this year we are reflecting on different aspects of the Sunday Eucharist, seeking to deepen our awareness of the personal encounter with Jesus, and the mission He entrusts to us as His disciples. Today we think about WELCOME—the welcome we give each other, the welcome God gives us when we come to his house, and the way we welcome Jesus into our lives in our Sunday Mass each week. *Please use this sheet for discussions in Church, parish meetings, or thoughts at home.*

1. MEETING JESUS IN OUR WELCOME

Bishop John writes ...

During Stage 3 of Hope in the Future, we are considering four particular “moments” in our celebration of the Sunday Eucharist. Our participation in the Mass binds us together as disciples, strengthens us and prepares us for our mission. During Stage 3 of our Pastoral Programme we are reflecting on how we encounter Jesus in four key parts of the Mass: Our Welcome, Our Listening, Our Offering and Our Mission. This week, as we enter the Season of Advent, we concentrate on meeting Jesus in our Welcome.

This Welcome is expressed in various ways. We arrive at church and welcome one another as members together of our parish community and be sure that visitors feel welcomed as our guests. We have come from our busy lives to celebrate the family of our parish. We bring with us our intentions for ourselves, family and friends and our hopes and concerns. When we arrive at Church, we encounter Jesus in one another, the Body of Christ. We are also welcomed, in the opening prayers of our Mass, by Jesus himself who greets us with forgiveness and reconciliation.

As we prepare to welcome Jesus anew this Christmas let us pray that each of us personally, and our parish community, may ‘prepare a way for the Lord’ in our lives. (Matthew 3:3).

The purpose of the Introductory Rites is to ensure that the faithful, who come together as one, establish communion and dispose themselves to listen properly to God's word and to celebrate the Eucharist worthily. In the Introductory Rites, Christ joins the Church to himself and gathers her children to join their voices to his perfect hymn of praise. Thus, the liturgical assembly, "where two or three come together in Christ's name, and where he is found in their midst (cf. Mt 18:20), is the 'first image that the Church gives of herself'". Indeed the assembly itself is also the first instance of Christ's presence in the liturgy.



"We come together to listen to God's word and be nourished by Christ's body and blood so that we can be his body in the world. The Introductory Rites help to bring us together, once more, as the Body of Christ.

The assembly's worship begins with the **opening song and procession**, which help to create a sense of identity, a willingness to celebrate, and an awareness of the mystery being unfolded.

After making the **Sign of the Cross** together, the priest and people exchange formal greetings as a mutual acknowledgement of the presence of Christ in their midst and as a prayer for his sustaining power.

In the **Penitential Act** the assembly, gathered in God's presence, recognises its sinfulness and confesses the mystery of Christ's love. The blessing and sprinkling of water serves as a memorial of Easter and Baptism. When it is used it replaces the Penitential Act. God is thanked for intervening to save us through the medium of water and is asked to continue to give forgiveness and life.

The **Gloria** is one of the Church's most ancient hymns. In the West its use was originally restricted to the opening of only the most solemn eucharistic celebrations. The Gloria is by nature a festive hymn.

The **Collect** completes the introductory rites. Through petition to God, it expresses the character of the celebration and prepares the assembly to hear the word of God."

DISCUSSION AND REFLECTION QUESTIONS

Use these questions to guide your personal reflection, or any discussions either at Mass or in Parish groups

- ◆ How do I prepare for Mass each Sunday?
- ◆ When I arrive at Church what is the first thing I do?
- ◆ Do I greet others? Do others greet me?
- ◆ How do I welcome the visitor or stranger?
- ◆ Is the Church conducive to prayer before Mass?
- ◆ Do I enter the Mass ready and looking forward to meeting Jesus?
- ◆ Do the Introductory rites get us into "the right place" for this celebration?

Practical Questions

- ◆ Is our Church easy to find and access?
- ◆ Are people with limited mobility able to get in easily?
- ◆ Are welcomers (or apparitors) on duty at every Mass?
- ◆ Is there room for people to greet each other and chat before entering Church?
- ◆ Are people accommodating with regard to seating?
- ◆ Are there spaces for people with disabilities or in wheelchairs?
- ◆ What resources are there in Church to help take part in Mass? Are they effective?

TRAINING SESSIONS: The Diocese is offering training for Ministers of Welcome, Musicians, Altar Servers and Clergy and all others who assist in the Welcome at Sunday Mass, taking place in 2020. For information about upcoming Formation and Training events and for resources on the Liturgy please visit www.dioceseofsalford.org.uk/parishes