

Joining Together in Prayer: Mystery of Faith

Those who pray or visit with a friend or go to a concert know how hard it is to listen, to be attentive. Our ears wander to the sounds of traffic outside. Our minds wander to unread emails, unpaid bills and dirty sinks. We itch and ache and have to work at paying attention. The liturgy allows for our humanity. It relies on repetition and rhythm to bring the wanderers home. Again and again, the liturgy calls us back, back to a focus on identity and service.

Identity: Who is God, and who are we before God? *Service:* How then shall we live?

During the Eucharistic prayer, after the words of institution over the bread and wine, the priest genuflects in adoration before the Body and Blood of Christ. He then says simply, “The mystery of faith.”

When the Church speaks of the mystery of faith, it does not mean that God is a trickster, playing a cosmic game of hide and seek with humankind. By mystery, the Church refers to the Divine, that which can never be fully known or understood by mortals.

God can never be fully explored by us. There is no end to the mercy of God, the beauty of God, the justice of God, the truth of God, the goodness of God. No matter how high we climb or how deep we dive into the revealed God, we will never exhaust the One who spoke the world into being. There is always more to behold. There is always more to adore. There is always more to praise.

The Mystery of Faith introduces nothing new or novel. Rather, it recalls and reaffirms all that has come before in the Mass: a profession of who God is, who we are before God and the life into which our baptism calls us.

1. We proclaim your death, O Lord,

And profess your Resurrection

Until you come again.

2. When we eat this Bread and drink this Cup,

we proclaim your death, O Lord,

until you come again.

3. Save us, Savior of the world,

for by your Cross and Resurrection,

you have set us free.

These acclamations recall both scripture and creed. Here is the gospel of Christ from Matthew. He blessed and broke bread during the Passover meal, gave the bread to his disciples and said, “Take this and eat it. This is my body.” (Matthew 26:26b) Christ gives his very life to us and for us. When we eat it, we proclaim his death on the cross.

Here is the gospel of Christ from Mark, as he takes a cup, gives thanks and passes it to his disciples to drink.

He said to them: “This is my blood, the blood of the covenant, to be poured out on behalf of many.” (Mark 14:24)

Throughout the centuries, all who drink the Cup proclaim the death of Jesus, his blood poured out for the life of the world.

Here is the gospel of Christ from Luke, praying from the cross for the forgiveness of the sins of the world, even as the world crucifies him. This is the Lamb of God, who takes away the sins of the world. This is the merciful One, the One of whom we sing in the Gloria.

Who are we? We are the people Christ has freed from sin and death. In his cross and resurrection, in his saving bread and life-giving cup, we are united to Christ and made one with him.

How then shall we live? We are to proclaim and profess this truth in every word and deed of our lives. And not us alone, the people of one parish, or nation, or time. For we are united with the whole Church throughout time and space. And our primary calling is to praise and glorify God, to proclaim Christ’ death and profess Christ’s resurrection. We are to do this, day after day, unceasing, until the end of time, when Christ will come again in glory.