

## Acclamations, Responses and Dialogues

What exactly are acclamations, responses and dialogues and where do they occur in the liturgy? Let's start with some basic definitions.

**ACCLAMATIONS** are shouts of joy by the assembly, usually short, simple and easily sung. Some familiar examples include the Gospel Acclamation (Alleluia), Sanctus/Holy, Memorial Acclamation, and Amen of the Eucharistic Prayer.

**RESPONSES** and **DIALOGUES** often happen together. The priest or deacon makes a statement to which the assembly responds. An example of a simple response is "Amen" by which the assembly gives their agreement to the prayer or action taking place. Another example is the liturgical greeting "The Lord be with you" to which the people respond "And also with you" creating a dialogue between priest and assembly.

So, what does the revised GIRM tell us about the purpose of these acclamations, responses, and dialogues? Why are they important? For two related reasons: participation and community.

The Church calls all the faithful to "full, conscious, active participation" in the liturgy. These acclamations, responses, and dialogues facilitate participation. The GIRM says that the acclamations, responses and dialogues "foster and bring about the communion between priest and people" (GIRM #34). We are called to do more than just "attend" Mass. By our baptism the Church expects us to actively participate by singing, praying, responding to, and

dialoguing with God and with one another.

When we come to Mass we gather as a community, not simply a group of individuals. The celebration of the liturgy is something that we all do together. We express this by joining our voices together in acclamations. We show our unity by responding together. We participate by joining in the dialogue. The GIRM tells us that this is the level of participation "that the gathered faithful are to contribute in every form of the Mass" (GIRM #35). It is by this active participation that we become a community of faith.

Why is this participation in community so important? This is how we worship together. The Church tells us that just being present isn't enough. We are called to participation, to unite our voices in praise of the goodness of God. This is how we become more and more a community, brothers and sisters united in Christ.

Consider the everyday conversations of life. Imagine asking your spouse how their day went and getting no reply; or inviting a friend to dinner only to discover they won't speak to you; or sharing good news with a co-worker who simply ignores you and walks away. Our participation in life is dependent upon dialogue with other people, making responses to statements and questions, acclaiming and affirming one another. So too, is our full participation in the liturgy dependent upon our contribution to the dialogues, acclamations and responses called for by the nature of the celebration.