

## The Actions of the Assembly at Mass

The Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy reminds us that “Every liturgical celebration is an action of Christ together with his body, the Church” (CSL #7) and that “...full, conscious, and active participation...is the aim to be considered above all else” (CSL #14). So what are the actions of the assembly at the sacred liturgy?

### **Our actions at liturgy are:**

**Gathering** – Everything that happens before the first reading is intended to help us gather as a Catholic community of faith. The GIRM describes it this way: “Their [the introductory rites] purpose is to ensure that the faithful who come together as one establish communion and dispose themselves to listen properly to God’s word and celebrate the Eucharist worthily” (GIRM #46).

**Listening** – This is what we do most of the time during the first main part of the Mass – The Liturgy of the Word - which extends from the proclamation of the first reading through the prayers of intercession. However, this kind of listening is not passive – it is something we do. We pay attention to God’s word as proclaimed by the readers, cantor, deacon or priest. We pay attention to the homilist as he breaks open the Word of God applies it to our day, to our country and community, to our family and ourselves. We pay attention as the prayers of our hearts are voiced in the Prayer of the Faithful, and ask God to hear our prayer. We are not “outsiders nor silent onlookers”, but active participants, listening with attentiveness, reflecting in silence, responding in word and song. God’s words will guide our actions this week, and all the days of our lives.

**Praising and Thanking** – This is what we do at the “center and summit of this entire celebration ... the Eucharistic Prayer, the prayer of thanksgiving and sanctification”

(GIRM #78). We are invited by the presider to lift our hearts and give God thanks and praise. As the presider names the ways God has blessed us, especially in giving us the gift of his Son, Jesus, we are moved to sing with the angels and saints, “Holy, Holy”. As the presider offers the gifts of bread and wine to the Father, he prays that they will be transformed into Christ’s Body and Blood. He prays that we will also be transformed into Christ’s Body and Blood for the world. As the presider helps us remember and make present today the precious gift of the life, death and resurrection of Jesus, we are moved to sing to Jesus one of the designated acclamations, “Lord, by your cross and resurrection, you have set us free. You are the savior of the world!” We sum up our praise and thanks to the Father by praising him through the Son and in the Holy Spirit to which we acclaim, “Amen, Amen!”

**Breaking and Sharing** – We now are ready to consummate the liturgy. “Through the fraction and through Communion, the faithful, though they are many, receive from the one bread of the Lord’s Body and from the one chalice of the Lord’s Blood in the same way the Apostles received them from Christ’s own hands” (GIRM #72). By sharing in Holy Communion we affirm our unity as the Body of Christ. This unity is expressed in the reverent way we process to share the sacred Body and Blood, in the way we sing our Communion psalms and hymns and inspired songs, in the way we share holy silence after all have received.

**Going forth** – Our final action is going and sending each other forth into the world to be the Body and Blood of Christ for each other and a broken world. This is the mission and call of all Catholics.