

PLACE OF WORSHIP FIELD TRIP RECORD

Spirituality of Sacraments (THEO 426) Bellarmino University Spring Semester, 2010

Your Name Hana Benjamin **Date** April 4, 2010

Name and Address of Church or Other Place of Worship
Our Lady of the Woods Chapel at Bellarmine University

Religious Service (e.g., weekly worship, baptism, wedding) Sunday Mass

Name and Phone Number of **Contact Person** Melanie Prejean-Sullivan

Role of Contact Person (e.g., member, deacon, pastor) Campus Minister

Type of Ritual (See textbook, pp. 66ff.)

Explain why you would categorize the service or parts of it as any of the following:

Calendrical ritual

The Eucharist of the seven sacraments is the only calendrical ritual because it is a weekly ritual celebrated on Sunday, the first day of the week.

Commemorative ritual

On this particular Sunday, which was Easter, Catholics commemorate Christ's resurrection from the dead.

Communion rite

In the Eucharist we share bread and wine, the Body and Blood of Christ our Savior, through Communion. "The most common communion ritual is a meal, since the sharing of food facilitates the sharing of stories, the exchange of ideas, and other activities that bring people together emotionally. Religious rites exchange and communion are built on the foundation of such basic human rituals" (p. 71). During Mass we receive the bread and wine that is turned into the Body and Blood of Christ with our fellow believers, the church community.

Rite of fasting

"Catholics had been required to fast from all food and drink from midnight whenever they intend to receive to Communion, but this requirement was reduced to three hours by Pope Pius XII in 1953 and then to one hour by Pope Paul VI in 1973, in part facilitated the reception of Communion during afternoon and evening Masses. Since the one-hour fast coincides with much of the time at the liturgy before communion rite, it is hardly felt as a restriction by most Catholics today" (p. 80). I remember in elementary school, we used to have to wait to eat our afternoon snack after we had gone to Church. This was to help us learn that it was important to fast before receiving Communion.

Characteristics of Ritual (See textbook, pp. 82ff.)

Explain why you would attribute any of these characteristics to the service or parts of it:

Traditionalism

Religious rituals generally have a traditional feeling to them. Even after Vatican II “the new Mass contained enough traditional elements for them to feel at home even though much had changed” (p. 84). There are parts of the mass that are very old and even the priest’s vestments are traditional.

Invariance

When going to Mass I know that certain aspects will always be the same. I know that there will be a Homily, an Our Father, and we will all receive Communion, to name a few. Because of this normalcy I know what to expect when I go to Church allowing myself to delve more deeply into the meaning of the ritual. “Most Sunday church services maintain a relatively stable format even though hymns, prayers, and scripture texts vary from week to week.... Invariant structure provides a sense of comfort derived from knowing what to do and knowing what comes next”(p. 85).

Performance

Going to Mass is a performance the way in which it is put together with a beginning, middle, and an end. When going to Mass I know that there will be certain parts or attributes that are added to give it a stronger affect including incense, lighting, and the songs sung. All of the actions that take place at Mass are “to frame the sacred time within which the significant action takes place” (p. 90).

Ritual Sensibility (See textbook, pp. 91ff.)

Explain why you would attribute any of these attitudes to the service or any parts of it:

Ritualization

Church falls into the category of ritualization when it is performed “unconsciously and automatically” (p. 92). I know for me and for many other people parts of the Mass I do without even realizing what I am doing it and I just do it because I am supposed to. An example of this is kneeling and standing throughout the ceremony, I am not sure why I am kneeling and standing but I know I am supposed to so I do.

Decorum

Decorum is polite behavior that is approved by society and carries cultural meaning. At church I noticed many examples of decorum. The way people act before Mass sitting quietly in their seats usually with their head bowed, the way people are dressed, usually business casual, and the silent manner in which we talk and greet others. If we were to act or dress in any other manner people may think we are crazy or are not having respect.

Ceremony

Mass is considered a ceremony because the people attending mass are “asserting the existence, beliefs, and values of society or a social group.... Ceremonial behavior is insistent on what it stands for and what it celebrates” (p. 93). Because ceremonies

symbolize the beliefs and values of society or a social group, anyone could attend Mass and recognize what the Catholic Church finds important and what they are worshiping.

Magic

This is defined as “the perception of cause and effect without understanding all the connections between them, that is, without understanding how the cause produces the effect”(p. 94). A person has to make their First Communion before they can receive the Eucharist, but after they go through the ceremony once then they are allowed to receive the Eucharist after that. Also the bread and wine become the Body and Blood of Christ, and we do not understand how this happens.

Liturgy

“Liturgy is a ritual activity that fosters spiritual experiences or religious experiences, that can trigger hierophanies or peak experiences, that tries to open up sacred space and time, that makes one receptive to important spiritual realities, that can heighten awareness or significant ideas and ideals, that can deepen the appreciation of mystery, or that can lead to an encounter with the transcendent” (p. 97). I would say that Mass is something that can invite me to have spiritual experiences, that helps me to understand my faith, and that deepens my appreciation of mystery of Christ’s presence.

Celebration

Celebrations publicly ritualize important events and significant realities past and present. Easter is a celebration because we are celebrating Jesus’ resurrection from the dead. Every week people come together to celebrate Jesus’ death and resurrection and we are happy for the salvation that he has brought us.

Functions of Religion (See textbook, pp. 36 ff.)

Explain which of these functions you found in the service or any parts of it:

Provides support and consolation to people

Our church family is there for us just like our regular family to listen to our problems. “Religion provides support, consolation, and reconciliation to people when they are faced with uncertainty, confronted with disappointment, and alienated from each other or society as a whole” (p. 38). Church welcomes everyone to join and is not there to judge others but to give them a place where they are accepted and feel loved. When at church I feel like all the people are there to welcome me and to spend time worshipping God together.

Offers a relationship with God or a higher power

By going to church I feel like my connection and my relationship to God is becoming better. I know that by going to church I am worshipping him and praying to him to become a better person. Through church my relationship grows stronger with God and with other people worshipping God in my church.

Offers group and individual identity

When going to Church we work with one another and pray with one another in a group. We are all praying to the same God thanking him for the same things. In my church at

home there is a woman named Mrs. Clark and she is very involved in the parish. Without her the parish would be very different. We “share life with people enjoying the same vision ... surrounded by the signs of faith” (p. 39).

Assists growth and maturation

Through going to church we grow and mature by hearing other people’s stories and learning from them. Through the scripture readings and homilies we learn what is right and what is wrong and how to go about doing the right thing. It is important to grow and live according to the way God wanted us to, and by following as closely as we can to Jesus’ footsteps we are growing and maturing.

Effects of Ritual (See textbook, pp. 42 ff.)

Explain which of these effects you observed in the service or any parts of it:

Has a unifying effect on the participants

When going to church at Bellarmine there are a lot of people that I know there including my mom and my roommate. When I experience mass with them I feel closer to them. “Rituals have a unifying effect on those who participate in them. Performing a common ritual with others unites people in a common action. Rituals therefore have an inherent power to say to people ‘We are in this together’”(p. 44).

Communicates beliefs and values to those in attendance

Every time we go to church we hear what we believe and we also say things like the Creed out loud, allowing others to know what our beliefs are. We have our values that we stand by. “Religious rituals can be said to symbolically articulate the shared religious experience of a community by putting into words and gestures what is understood about itself”(p. 48).

Sacred Aspects of Ritual (See textbook, pp. 9 ff.)

Explain which of these aspects you felt in the service or any parts of it:

Feels like sacred space

Since I was young I have been told that a church is a sacred place because Jesus is present in the tabernacle and that is where we go to worship him. To this day I do find church to be a sacred place because of that reason. We go to this place to give thanks and praise.

Feels like sacred time

People act a certain way during mass that make it a sacred time. We realize what this time is being used for, and we act accordingly. Because God has given us so much it is important to thank Him in a respectful manner.

Offers an experience of sacred realities

Going to church is important for me because it is there that I connect with God and thank Him for everything. I am with people I love and thanking the person who has given me everything to be thankful for. God and my loved ones, they are all sacred.

Offers a peak or plateau experience

Church to me is a plateau experience because it makes me think of God and his amazing power to create human life and to make the world what it is. Every time I pray the Our Father I get an overwhelming feeling of being connected to the people around me and the great creation God has made. Plateau experiences “bring together in a moment of heightened awareness a re-realization of values, beliefs, and feelings that have already been experienced and affirmed as sacred” (p. 15).

Symbolic Aspects of Ritual (See textbook, pp. 16 ff.)

Explain which of these aspects you observed during your visit:

Pictorial images (painting, drawings, etc.)

In church one of the most amazing pictorial images is the stained glass window. It is made out of colored pieces of glass and the pictures represent scenes in Jesus' life.

Sculpted images (statues, carvings, etc.)

One very common example of a sculpted image in a church is a crucifix that has been carved out of wood or another substance that is there to represent Jesus dying on the cross for our sins. A statue of Our Lady is also present.

Abstract symbols (cross, star, etc.)

The cross is an example of an abstract image because it represents the cross on which Jesus died for our sins, but it is abstract because it does not show the body of Jesus.

Symbolic actions (gestures, ceremonies, etc.)

Some symbolic actions that take place during mass are dipping our fingers in holy water and making the sign of the cross as we enter church, kneeling at different times during mass, and shaking hands to give a sign of peace and show our love for others.

Symbolic stories (biblical, contemporary, etc.)

Every mass there is always a different biblical story told during the Gospel and usually the priest will relate it to his life or the life of others during the homily. Many times he will also tell us a story from real life that helps us learn a lesson.

Emotional Aspects of Ritual (See textbook, pp. 27 ff.)

Explain which of these aspects you felt or observed during your visit:

Communitas (for some, for all, for yourself)

When you go to church at Bellarmine you see many of the students you see on a regular basis, so you begin to feel a closeness with them when you see them in church.

“Communitas in ritual can only be evoked easily when there are many occasions outside the ritual on which communitas has been achieved” (p. 29).