

PLACE OF WORSHIP FIELD TRIP RECORD

Name: Joanna Sells

Date: April 11, 2010

Name and Address of Worship: St. Margaret Mary Parish, Louisville, KY

Religious Service: Weekly Worship

Contact Person: Fr. Stephen Pohl

Role of Contact Person: Pastor

Type of Ritual

Calendrical Ritual: Divine Mercy Sunday. This feast day takes place every year, on the Sunday after Easter.

Commemorative Ritual: Commemorating Christ's resurrection from the dead.

Communion Rite: Mass is an example of a communion rite. When we attend Mass, we often think of it as communing with the divine. We also receive communion.

Characteristics of Ritual

Formalism: During this Mass, there were definitely elements of formalism present. Most of those in attendance were dressed in more formal clothing, and everyone showed aspects of more formal behavior. Everyone was quiet, attentive, and respectful during the Mass. During the liturgy, there are also elements of formalism because most of the words are scripted and the actions involved are also scripted.

Traditionalism: There were a few elements of traditionalism seen during the Mass. The vestments worn by Father Stephen are very traditional. The music played during the Mass is also a part of the church's tradition. The order of service has been the same as long as I can remember.

Invariance: As stated during the notes about traditionalism, every liturgy is different, but the way in which everything takes place is very much the same. Prayers, music and activities are generally the same. The church changes the readings based on what the message is for that day. This sense of invariance allows for a very comfortable feeling during Mass because you can usually predict what is going to happen next, and nothing out of the ordinary is thrown your way.

Sacred symbolism: During the Eucharistic Prayer, the bread and the wine are believed to turn into the body and blood of Christ. They symbolize his ultimate sacrifice and serve as reminders that Christ died to save us from our sins.

Performance: I can see how the liturgy is a performance. There is a beginning, middle, and end to this ritual. For the communion part, the gifts are brought to the altar, the priest recites the words from the Last Supper, we receive the gifts, and end with prayer.

Ritual Sensibility

Ritualization: During prayer, we typically bow our heads and close our eyes without even thinking about it. We do it automatically. We know what to say to the priest when he says “The body of Christ” while giving us the host. The parts of the Mass that we sing can also be considered another element of ritualization. It becomes second nature after participating in it regularly.

Decorum: During Mass, we exhibit many elements of decorum. Everyone knows that we are expected to be polite and courteous during Mass. When we offer peace to one another, it is polite to shake hands and look people in the eyes when offering peace. Everyone is quiet and respectful during Mass, so not to interrupt the quality of worship for anyone else.

Magic: While listening to the priest speak as he prepares the gifts for communion, we believe that the bread and wine will become the body and blood of Christ. When the priest holds up the host after saying the words of consecration, we think that Jesus is there. We perceive some sort of change taking place, without really knowing how it happens

Liturgy: Father Stephen drew from various experiences and stories to help us make more meaningful connections, and to help us develop a deeper understanding of the meaning of divine mercy.

Celebration: With Easter, we celebrate Christ’s resurrection from the dead. He died for every single one of us because of our sins, and he rose from the dead to show that we will also rise some day. That is certainly something worth talking about.

Functions of Religion

Provides support and consolation to people: Being in a group of people who share similar interests and values with you always gives you a sense of support. During a time when we reflect upon Christ’s sacrifice, we seek support and consolation during worship. We understand that our sins were the reason that Christ died on the cross for us.

Promotes reconciliation with God: No matter what has happened since the last time we have spoken to God or gone to church, worship helps to promote reconciliation with God. When we speak to him during prayer, we are asking forgiveness and pledging to live in His way. We strengthen our relationship with Him each time we attend Mass, and are able to repent from our sins after worship.

Promotes reconciliation with other people: During the week, I had had some tough times with my parents at home. Attending this Mass allowed us to reconcile with one another and move forward into

better times. We seem to be able to set everything aside and come together for a common purpose, leaving Mass as better people and better able to forgive one another.

Offers a relationship with God or a higher power: While I know that I have a relationship with God whether I am in church or not, I feel that my relationship is strengthened each time I attend Mass. I feel closer to Him when I am in church. I suppose this could be because I consider it a sacred space, and I can truly focus my attention on the words spoken during Mass. I devote all of my thoughts to God, and speak to him through prayer.

Offers group and individual identity: As a group, we all know that we are Catholics who believe in God the Father and hope to one day be reunited with Him in heaven. We have an identity as a group during church because we come together for a common cause and purpose. More importantly, we develop individual identity during Mass. It is up to each individual to take away certain meaning and value from each service, just as it is up to us to determine what type of Christian we want to be.

Assists growth and maturation: I definitely feel that attending this Mass can assist in the growth and maturation of each person as individuals and as a Christian. We learn about God and listen to stories from the Bible. We learn about the way we should be living our lives, and grow each day as Christians. We grow in our knowledge each day, as well as growing in our relationship with God.

Effects of Ritual

Has a unifying effect on participants: Just as with any group or club, we all come together in church for a common purpose: to grow in our faith and become closer to God. When a group of people come together to listen to the spoken word and pray together, it definitely has a unifying effect on the congregants of the church. I especially feel the unifying effect each time we pray, when we all say "Amen" in unison. It is a very powerful moment for me.

Facilitates spiritual or social transition to individuals or groups: Throughout the week I am sure that everyone experiences a moment when we feel a loss of faith or question God's presence in the world. Attending Mass today helped to facilitate a spiritual transition for me, reaffirming my faith and strengthening my belief in God. I think worshipping in a large group of people who share many of the same beliefs help to facilitate these transitions each week.

Communicates beliefs and values to those in attendance: Obviously we listen to the priest speak during mass, read excerpts from the Bible, and preach about living a true and Christian life. Mass is a way to communicate these beliefs and values to those in attendance. While we can learn about these beliefs and values outside of formal services, I feel that for me personally it is much more meaningful when I listen to the words spoken by the priest during Mass. It really helps to put things into perspective for me, and thus becomes more meaningful.

Sacred Aspects of Ritual

Feels like sacred space: Being surrounded by all of the stained glass windows depicting sacred images, the sculptures within the larger structure of the church, seeing the stations of the cross depicted on the pillars that serve as the foundation of the structure, and the holy water and oil certainly makes my church feel like a sacred space. While it is crowded during Mass, it also feels very open and surreal, almost empty. It is quiet and peaceful, and the way the light shines through the window feels as though that is God's way of confirming His presence in our lives. Everything seems to be just as it should be, creating a very powerful and sacred space to worship.

Feels like sacred time: Because I do not attend church as often as I would like, this time that I am in church is especially sacred. As I have mentioned before, this time allows me to really focus on God and on my faith, without letting any outside distractions get in my way. I really take the prayers to heart and use this time as sacred time to strengthen my relationship with my peers and with God.

Offers a peak or plateau experience: I feel that there are many "Aha" moments during Mass. I don't know if it is the way Father Stephen presides over the liturgy, or if it is simply because of how attentive I am, but there are many peak experiences throughout this time of worship. I am able to make a connection from what is being said during Mass to something that might have happened in my daily life, which really offers a peak experience for me.

Symbolic Aspects of Ritual

Sculpted images: I think the sculpted images that capture my attention every time I am in church would have to be the stations of the cross that are found on the pillars around the church. When I was in eighth grade, my class acted out the stations of the cross for the rest of the church, and since then I notice them every time I enter the church. I played Mary then, which really pushed me to empathize with Mary, and experience just a small piece of what she must have felt. The images are monochromatic and simple, but for me that makes them all the more symbolic. It's not about their physical appearance, but their spiritual meaning and how it affects us today.

Abstract symbols: Now more than ever, the cross is extremely symbolic. As I grow older and more understanding of my religion, I realize how truly symbolic the cross is every time I see it. Whether it is when I walk into church, or even into my room and see the crosses hanging on the wall, I recognize that it represents Christ and His death, and how that has allowed me to live a life full of happiness and freedom.

Symbolic Actions: Each time we raise our hands in prayer saying the Our Father, I feel that our gestures are truly lifting up our words and sending them to the heavens. That small gesture leaves a large impact on me. When I was younger I didn't really understand what the gesture meant, but now I feel I have a much better understanding, one that helps me to develop a deeper connection to God during prayer. I

understand that for some this might seem silly, but for me, it has become an important aspect of worship.

Emotional Aspects of Ritual

Liminality: Participating in the Mass pushes me outside of one social group and into the social group that is my congregation. I go from being a college student who is surrounded by many people unsure of their beliefs, and into being someone who is surrounded by people who share my faith and do not question my beliefs or values. I sometimes wonder where I fit in God's plans, and at times feel separated from everyone else. But at the end of the day, the challenges I face make me a stronger person.

Communitas: Being a part of such a large congregation really gives me the sense of community. I know many of the people who come to worship every Sunday, and have interacted with many of them outside of the church. We all share the same desire to strengthen our relationship with God and to grow in our faith, and attending Mass today reaffirms our commitment to one another as members of the Catholic community.