



THE PASTOR'S DESK

April 25, 2010 - Ringing of Bells at Mass

Dear Parishioners,

In my eighth grade CCD class, one of the students asked me last week "What's up with the bells at Mass?" He asked a good question. In the Mass before 1964 (what is now the "Extraordinary Form"), the bell would be rung at the Sanctus (the "Holy, Holy, Holy), at the epiclesis (the invocation of the Holy Spirit over the gifts), and the consecration of the bread and wine. These bell rings are required in this form of the Mass.

In the Mass in the Ordinary Form (using the Missal of 1970), the bells may be rung at the epiclesis and at the elevations of the host and the chalice. They are not required, though.

Why did the ringing of bells ever enter the Mass? A reason I've heard is that in the Mass said in Latin with priest facing the same direction as the congregation, the people can't really tell what is going on. The bells served to call their attention to the important parts of the Mass. But, attending Mass week in and week out for your entire life even in the older form of the Mass, you would get a good idea of what was going on. Even in the new Mass in the vernacular, there seems to be a certain logic to the bell ringing. What is this logic? When you look at the actions at Mass in light of the events being made present in the Mass, you can see this logic.

In the older form of the Mass, the bell is first rung at the Sanctus. This is the "Holy, Holy, Holy Lord, God of power and might, Heaven and earth are full of your Glory, Hosanna in the Highest, blessed is He who comes in the name of the Lord, Hosanna in the Highest." This echoes what the crowd cried out when Jesus entered Jerusalem. We just had this reading on Palm Sunday. It is the gospel from Matthew 21 that is read outside the Church at the blessing of the palms: "The crowds preceding him and those following kept crying out and saying: 'Hosanna to the Son of David; blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord; hosanna in the highest.' And when he entered Jerusalem the whole city was shaken . . ."

In the old form and in the new form of the Mass, the bells are rung at the epiclesis. This is when the priest invokes the Holy Spirit while placing his hands over the gifts on the altar. In the second Eucharistic Prayer, for example, the priest says "Let your Spirit come upon these gifts to make them holy . . ." In Acts chapter 4, Peter and John are questioned by the council about the healing of the crippled man.

When they were released they went to their friends and reported what the chief priests and the elders had said to them. And when they heard it, they

lifted their voices together to God and said: . . . And now, Lord, look upon their threats, and grant to your servants to speak your word with all boldness, while you stretch out your hand to heal, and signs and wonders are performed through the name of your holy servant Jesus.' And when they had prayed, the place in which they were gathered together was shaken; and they were all filled with the Holy Spirit and spoke the word of God with boldness.

The next time the bells are rung is after the consecration and at the elevation of each of the species. When the host is held up for everyone to see and the chalice with the Precious Blood is held up for all to see. This is the moment in the Mass where the crucifixion of the Lord is sacramentally indicated. The gospel of Matthew describes the death of the Lord in this way: "And behold, the curtain of the temple was torn in two, from top to bottom; and the earth shook. . ."

I hope by now you have picked up on the logic of the bells at Mass. The bells ringing indicate the earth shaking. The events from scripture made present in the Mass are truly earthshaking: Jesus' entry into Jerusalem, the Holy Spirit coming down, and the death of the Lord. All of these events occur sacramentally at Mass. Because they are present sacramentally, they are not present explicitly. We cannot go back in time to be there when they happened. But, because of the work of the Holy Spirit in the Church, those events can be brought to us here and now. The bells indicate that these earthshaking events are still earthshaking for us today. Next time you hear the bells at Mass think of the earthshaking event that is present to you now and meditate on how the world is still being shaken by God through his Church.

**God bless,
Fr. LaHood**

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Archbishop's Appeal

We have received the first report on our response to the Archbishop's Appeal. It is very good news! In spite of all the snow (remember?) still on the ground that weekend, we exceeded our goal in the amount pledged. Our goal was \$143,536.00. We pledged \$151,327.00, or 105.43% of our goal.

Thanks to everyone who pledged to support this important work of the Archdiocese. Congratulations to all of you for your generosity.