

Traveling Companion: "Let's Celebrate Mass", He said

Fr. Michael Tracey

Jesus called me up the other day and said, "Let's celebrate Mass." I said, "Look, Jesus, I'm in shock and obviously nervous about the idea, but, if you say so, I'm open to any suggestion from you."

"Ok," he said, "now that I have your attention, let's start." I nodded my approval so he continued, "Let's start at the beginning. "Notice the first thing we do is make the sign of the cross. What does that remind you of?" I didn't have a chance to answer. "It's about relationships, mine and yours; my family of the Trinity and your family of faith." "Notice what we do next?" he said, "We greet each other. The words are Paul's greetings. I like him. He was one of my best preachers."

"What do we do next at Mass?" Before I could answer him, he said, "I ask folks to tell about how their week has been since we got together before. What pressures they are under, what struggles they have, how their week has gone. I listen to them tell me all about it. You have a fancy name for that, don't you?" "Yes," I answered, "the Penitential Rite." He nodded in agreement.

"Now, I give you my word, from the Old Testament, the New Testament and Gospel. I am always true to my word. People are hungry for it, that's why they are here. I am the messenger and the message," he said.

Then, with a sparkle in his eye, he remarked, "Now comes your part, the homily. I hope you take it seriously and prepare. After you have digested my word, you can share its insights and challenges with the folks out there in church." Sheepishly, I nodded.

"The Creed," he said, "that's a capsule version of everything you believe. Pray it. Show it. Live it." Again, I nodded my approval.

"Prayers of the Faithful come next. I like those," he continued. "I like to know what's on people's minds, what my people and my church need most of all and I am anxious to meet their deepest needs." "I have lots of those," I reminded him. He simply smiled.

"Now, we come to the Offertory. I like this part too," he added. "Here you bring me gifts of bread and wine, symbols of what you eat and drink and I transform them into my body and blood. You also offer me your fears, hopes, struggles, joys, sorrows, etc. and I want you to know that I can transform these also." "I like the idea of offering ourselves as we are," I told him.

"Then we come to the part where I am transformed so that I might be able to share myself totally with you a little later on." I nodded for him to continue.

"The Our Father, ah, yes! My favorite prayer! After all, I created it. You learned it long ago. Now, I want you to slow it down, believe it and live it." "I'll try," I responded.

"Communion," he continued. "I like sharing myself totally with people. I like to live, breathe and work through my special creatures."

Here I mustered up some courage and said, "But, Lord, you have been so generous already. You have welcomed me. You have forgiven my sins. You had shared with me and challenged me with your words. You have listened to my needs. You have accepted my gifts and now you want to share the greatest gift of all with me – Yourself. This is too much, Lord. I am not worthy."

Of course, he had an answer. "I know you are not worthy. I'm not doing it because you are worthy or not worthy. I am simply sharing myself with you because I love. It is as simple and as powerful as that. Try to understand and believe it." "I will," I muttered back.

"I've got to go now," he said with an air of urgency "but before I do, I have some parting thoughts. Just think of what we've talked about and what I've done for you. Now, I have a challenge for you. Please take me with you wherever you go this week. Allow me to live through you, speak through you and work through you and come back next week and tell me how you got on."

In the twinkling of an eye, he disappeared. But his visit made a lasting impression on me.