

We Follow a Leader

So far in these reflections we have seen that we come to church to pray with others, rather than staying at home or somewhere else to pray alone, because God has called us together in Christ who says Wherever two or three are gathered in my name, there am I in their midst.. Once here we take what time we can to prepare ourselves for Mass so we can put the most into it, and get the most out of it; to give it our full, conscious, and active participation as the Second Vatican Council's Decree on the Liturgy says. Then, once Mass itself begins, the very first thing we do is... follow a leader, most often a song leader who announces what the opening song will be and invites us to join in singing it. When I anticipated writing this week's piece about the very first thing we do as Mass itself begins, I first thought I would write about our singing of the opening song. However, as I thought about it further, it occurred to me that the very first thing that happens is actually how we follow a leader, most often, as I said, the song leader. But even in the absence of a song leader (like at daily Mass) the first thing that happens is that the congregation does what it does in response to the initiative and leadership of another, for example, standing when the priest comes into the sanctuary. The significance of this is that it makes it clear that our celebration of the Eucharist is not a personal, private, or individual action, but the action of a group or community of people. Just as any group and community that would act in unison and unity needs leadership, so too does our gathering at Mass. So, while there are some times of quiet built into the Mass for individual prayer and reflection, the whole of the Mass itself is a communal action, a communal prayer that needs the full, conscious, and active participation of all to be the best that it can be. Also, those who lead others at Mass, be it the musicians, the priest, or other ministers, carry out that leadership in service of those gathered, not from any position of superiority or advantage over them. So, at the beginning of Mass and throughout, we follow a leader because we are a gathering of people who need the help, the service of others to pray best with one heart and voice.

Please let us know what else about our faith tradition you'd like to find out more about. Contact our Council for Catechesis at tkautza@saintmaryhc.org.