



What's What

A weekly communication that provides an opportunity for our faith community to grow together in faith.

Silent Prayers at Mass

When I was an altar server one of my favorite parts of Mass was bringing the water and towel to the priest so that he could wash his hands. The reason I found this so fascinating is because the priest would often whisper a prayer, and I hoped to catch a word or two of what he was saying. At the time I did not know what he was saying, or why he was saying it silently. A few years of seminary have changed that for me, and I would like to give some explanation.

The prayers that are said silently are a different type of prayer than those that are

prayed communally. When we pray together, typically the prayers ask God for something and the community responds to this petition. However, the silent prayers at Mass are not like this. Instead they fall into two categories: personal private prayers (between the minister and God) and blessings for which no response is necessary.

An example of the first case occurs when the priest washes his hands at Mass. During this ritual washing, he offers a personal prayer. The words of this prayer are "Lord, wash away my iniquity; cleanse me from my sin."

This prayer is a private prayer that the priest says in order to prepare himself to offer the sacrifice of Christ. Since this prayer is private and meant for only one person, it is said silently.

At other times in the Mass there are silent prayers of blessing that are also said inaudibly. These are blessings for which no response is necessary. One such time occurs when the priest or deacon comingles a drop of water with this wine. The priest or deacon says, "Through the mingling of this water and wine may we come to share in the divinity of Christ who humbled himself to share in our humanity." While this prayer is not a private, personal prayer between the Celebrant and God, it fits into the category of a blessing that is offered by the minister for which there is no response necessary. As such it is said silently.

The type of blessing offered in the comingling rite is different than that offered at the consecration. The consecration brings about a new reality, as what used to be bread and wine cease to be bread and wine and become the body and blood of Christ. As such, this prayer is said audibly and the entire congregation responds to this prayer with the great Amen. The comingling

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Things to talk about:

- What is the difference between personal and communal prayer in your life?
- Do you offer prayers and blessings in silence (e.g. Do you bless your children, parents, siblings)? How are these similar to the silent prayers at Mass?

rite, on the other hand, is a blessing, that does not bring about a new reality. It is not a statement that demands a response. It is not superfluous, because it does remind us that we are about to share in the divine. At the same time, it is not the prayer that brings about our participation in the divine, and therefore is not a prayer that demands a response. For this reason it, and prayers like it, are said inaudibly.

- by Deacon Brian Carpenter



Did You Know?

After the priest or deacon read the Gospel they kiss the book of the Gospels and quietly say: May the words of the Gospel wipe away our sins.

At Masses where there is an offertory hymn being sung, when the priest raises the bread and wine he offers a silent prayer. If there is no offertory song, he says the prayer audibly and the congregation responds, "Blessed be God Forever."

After preparing the Altar, the priest bows and silently says "Lord God, we ask you to receive us and be pleased with the sacrifice we offer you with humble and contrite hearts."

Before the priest receives Communion, he says the following prayer: "May the body (blood) of Christ being me to everlasting life."

After communion the priest or deacon purifies (cleans) the chalice and paten and prays "Lord, may I receive these gifts in purity of heart. May they bring me healing and strength now and forever."



Saint of the Day: Blessed Kateri Tekakwitha

July 14 is the feast of Blessed Kateri Tekakwitha.

The blood of martyrs is the seed of saints. Nine years after the Jesuits Isaac Jogues and John de Brébeuf were tortured to death by Huron and Iroquois Indians, a baby girl was born near the place of their martyrdom, Auriesville, New York. She was to be the first person born in North America to be beatified.

Her mother was a Christian Algonquin, taken captive by the Iroquois and given as wife to the chief of the Mohawk clan, the boldest and fiercest of the Five Nations. When she was four, Kateri lost her parents and little brother in a smallpox epidemic that left her disfigured and half blind. She was adopted by an uncle, who succeeded her father as chief. He hated the coming of the Blackrobes (missionaries), but could do nothing to them because a peace treaty with the French required their presence in villages with Christian captives. She was moved by the words of three Blackrobes who lodged with her uncle, but fear of him kept her from seeking instruction.

She refused to marry a Mohawk brave and at 19 finally got the courage to take the step of converting. She was baptized with the name Kateri (Catherine) on Easter Sunday.

Now she would be treated as a slave. Because she would not work on Sunday, she received no food that day. Her life in grace grew rapidly. She told a missionary that she often meditated on the great dignity of being baptized. She was powerfully moved by God’s love for human beings and saw the dignity of each of her people.

She was always in danger, for her conversion and holy life created great opposition. On the advice of a priest, she stole away one night and began a 200-mile walking journey to a Christian Indian village at Sault St. Louis, near Montreal.

For three years she grew in holiness under the direction of a priest and an older Iroquois woman, giving herself totally to God in long hours of prayer, in charity and in strenuous penance. At

23 she took a vow of virginity, an unprecedented act for an Indian woman, whose future depended on being married. She found a place in the woods where she could pray an hour a day—and was accused of meeting a man there!

Her dedication to virginity was instinctive: She did not know about religious life for women until she visited Montreal. Inspired by this, she and two friends wanted to start a community, but the local priest dissuaded her. She humbly accepted an “ordinary” life. She practiced extremely severe fasting as penance for the conversion of her nation. She died the afternoon before Holy Thursday. Witnesses said that her emaciated face changed color and became like that of a healthy child. The lines of suffering, even the pockmarks, disappeared and the touch of a smile came upon her lips. She was beatified in 1980.

From www.americancatholic.org/saintoftheday.html



Connections to Doctrine & Tradition

- Blessed Kateri Tekakwitha is not a saint yet. She is still going through the process of canonization.
- Blessed Kateri Tekakwitha has gone through the first two stages of the canonization process. The first is when a person’s “cause” for sainthood is investigated. At this point a person is called Servant of God. The second is beatification, after which the person is called Blessed. The final step requires another miracle to be performed through the intercession of the beatified person. This is called canonization, at which point in time the person is called a saint.

Want to know more?

Would you like to know more about Blessed Kateri Tekakwitha? Check out the following book and website for more information:

- [Kateri Tekakwitha: Mystic of the Wilderness](#) by Margaret Bunson.
- <http://conservation.catholic.org/kateri.htm>

These are just suggestions. In providing these we assume no responsibility for, nor do we necessarily endorse these books or websites, their content, or their sponsoring organizations.

“What’s What” is a publication of the Youth Ministry Department of St Mary, Canandaigua, and St Bridget, Bloomfield.

Our Youth Ministry Mission Statement:

Building on the mission of our parishes to follow the way of Christ in our thoughts, words, and deeds, and to make Christ more fully present in all who live within our community, the Youth Ministry mission is to empower young people to live as disciples of Jesus Christ in the world today; to affirm the gifts of our youth and provide opportunities for young people to share their gifts with the larger community; and to meet the religious, spiritual and social needs of all youth with the committed leadership, guidance and support of our parish family, providing an opportunity for our entire faith community to grow together in Christian faith.