

We continue again with the liturgical participation of God's people.

Liturgical Environment: In 2000, the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops published a document about the environment of our church buildings entitled Built of Living Stones. In Chapter 31 it states: "The church building fosters participation in the liturgy. Because liturgical actions, by their nature, are communal celebrations, they are celebrated with the presence and active participation of the Christian faithful whenever possible. ... The building itself can promote or hinder the 'full, conscious and active participation' of the faithful."

The shape and design, lighting and color, furnishings and freedom to move will have a definite impact on the ability of the community to actively participate in the liturgy. A church building needs to be constructed with both appearance and liturgical usage in mind.

Music: The recent statement on liturgical music of the U.S. Bishops, *Sing to the Lord*, underscores the important role played by musical participation at worship. "Christ, whose praises we have sung, remains with us and leads us through the church doors to the whole world ... Inspired by sung participation, the body of the Word Incarnate goes forth to spread the Gospel." When people sing at Mass, they are not just making music, they are participating in the prayer of the liturgy.

Sing to the Lord addresses both internal and external participation. Listening to prayers voiced by the priest celebrant or music sung by the choir is a form of internal celebration. At other times "our participation must also be external, so that internal participation can be expressed and reinforced by actions, gestures, and bodily attitudes, and by the acclamations, responses and singing."

Conclusion

The better the celebration of the liturgy, the more there is on which to reflect. A liturgy is better celebrated not only when the ministers do their roles well, but especially when the people participate fully through all the various liturgical languages. That is why a liturgy needs not only to be done correctly, but also needs to be rich and expressive in order to touch our hearts and minds. This is the challenge and opportunity the liturgy presents to each of us every time we come to the Mass.

The language of the liturgy is more than just words. Poetic and symbolic, liturgical language is something we need to *enter into* more than *understand*. It speaks through mind and body, through sacrament and symbol, through all the senses. To be a fully conscious and active member of the assembly, one needs to be able to speak the language of the liturgy in its many forms.