

CATECHESIS #16

June 23, 2019

Why is the reading of the Gospel different from the other readings?

The Church teaches that: "The reading of the Gospel is the high point of the Liturgy of the Word. The Liturgy itself teaches that great reverence is to be shown to it by setting it off from the other readings with special marks of honor..." There are significant preparations that occur just before we hear the Gospel: we stand, we sing an acclamation, there may be incense and candles, there is a greeting and we bless ourselves. We do all this to emphasize our belief that in the proclamation of the Gospel, Christ is truly present and speaking to us.

After the Second Reading, when the priest or deacon is doing his own preparation to proclaim the gospel, we rise to our feet and greet this immanent encounter with joyful cries of "Alleluia!" This change of posture is a sign of respect and honor as when someone important comes into our presence and we stand to greet them. The cries of Alleluia reflect our joy that Jesus, the Word of God, has come among us and we are eager to hear His Good News.

The priest will then greet us with the words "The Lord be with you." We will recall previously having learned the significance of this greeting – we are about to begin a dangerous mission. In essence, the priest is warning us that we are about to hear words that will bring life or death to us.

After this greeting the priest proclaims, "A reading from the holy Gospel according to..." Matthew, Mark, Luke or John; to which we answer "Glory to you, O Lord." We note that our response is giving glory to Jesus our Lord, not the priest. As we say these words we simultaneously use our thumb to mark our forehead, lips and heart with a small cross. As we perform this gesture, we ask the Holy Spirit to keep the words of the Gospel ever on our mind, our lips and in our heart.

The candles being held beside the Gospel are a visual reminder of Christ the Light Who has come into the world. If incense is used, the priest will incense the Gospel at this point, reminding us of the scripture that says: "The smoke of the burning incense went up with the prayers of God's people from the hands of the angel standing before God." (Rev 8:4)

Through these preparations we are called to reflect on the importance of what we are about to hear. Despite there being many people in the church, Christ has an important, personal message for each of us and He doesn't want us to miss it.

Source:

https://www.creighton.edu/fileadmin/user/ministry/StJohns/docs/Girm/d-GIRM_03-The_Gospel.pdf
GIRM #60 & 62