

PASTOR'S COLUMN

“Ritual As Kingdom Play”

I share with you some thoughts from Jesuit Father James L. Empereur, vicar and liturgist at the San Fernando Cathedral in San Antonio, that may be helpful to you in setting a context as you come to the Eucharist each week:

“Several years ago, Robert Hovda, one of America’s most pastorally oriented liturgists, wrote that the liturgy is like playing at the kingdom of God. What he meant was that in the ritual enactment of liturgical celebrations we momentarily act as if the kingdom of God has arrived.

Liturgy is like a rehearsal for a play. When a theatre group is in its final rehearsal it does everything – music, costumes, directions – as if it is the actual performance. Only the full audience is absent. For Hovda, that is what liturgy should be. For an hour on Sunday the Christian community is in its final dress rehearsal. In the celebration it does everything as if the kingdom of God has arrived. All barriers between sexes, classes, races and generations are brushed away. For this hour, presider, ministers and congregation are united in ‘playing the play.’ The only difference is that the kingdom has not yet arrived and so when the worshipers leave the place of the assembly, all those old injustices, biases and personal enmities reemerge in their attempt to govern their lives.

What Hovda and others saw so clearly is that all authentic worship must be contextualized by the reform of sinful structures and a ministry to the poor and oppressed.”

As we, the Church of St. Thomas More, gather together each week to celebrate the Eucharist, may our worship be authentic. May we leave the Assembly reenergized to move in the midst of our world and society to reform sinful structures, to minister to the poor and oppressed, and to help bring about the kingdom of God for this time and place.

Fr. Mike