**Liturgy Matters Lesson #12**

 **“Thanks be to God”**

**By Bishop Chad Zielinski**

Thank you for joining me in this 6th week of the Easter Season as we continue our lessons on “What Happens at Mass.”

Now it is time to discuss the "First Reading." I have said that the Gospel is the center of the Liturgy of the Word. This claim has its roots in the Old Testament, and on a basic level, it is a careful reading of the text as a whole leading us to make such a claim. The Old Testament, used in the first reading, is a vast collection of theological traditions developed well over a thousand years. Yet, despite the differences between the many human circumstances and authors that are reflected there, it is not difficult for the one who reads with faith to see that the collection as a whole leads to a center. When a passage of this collection is read at Mass, now in virtue of Jesus' Resurrection, that original event becomes the event of the community that hears it. That is, the Christian community hears it with the insight lent by the presence of the risen Lord. What happens at Mass during the reading of the Old Testament passage was expressed already in the Gospel of Luke, where the story of the Risen Lord's appearance to the two disciples along the road to Emmaus is recounted. "How slow you are to believe all that the prophets have announced!" and again later, "Jesus said, Everything written about me in the law of Moses and the prophets and psalms had to be fulfilled."

In addition to the context of the first reading, we should also take into account the one who is asked to read the passage. More is happening here than just a sense of "somebody has to do this," so we chose one of the baptized. Even as we listen to the reading, we should marvel at the grace that enables one of us to stand up and be used as an instrument through which the holy and life-giving Word of God is announced in the assembly. At the end of the proclamation of the passage, the reader bluntly declares what we have just heard: "The word of the Lord." As the body of Christ, we express orally what is in our hearts, "Thanks be to God!"

Thank you for joining me as we draw deeper into the Word of God proclaimed at Mass. May the Easter greeting of the Risen Christ fill you with a renewed peace and continue to strengthen us as we grow closer to Him through our understanding and participation in the Holy Mass.

I look forward to sharing Lesson #13 with you next week. Let us keep one another in prayer. May God bless you and your families.

Sincerely in Christ,

Bishop Chad Zielinski