**Liturgy Matters Lesson #2 —“Mystery of the Assembly”**

**By Bishop Chad Zielinski**

Thank you for joining me as we continue our lessons on “What Happens at Mass.”

The Mass begins long before it begins. Much has gone into its preparation, and the actual beginning of the liturgical ceremony is a culmination of many graces mysteriously at work in the lives of hundreds and even thousands of people. I am not talking about turning on the lights of the building and opening the doors, preparing the vessels and vestments, and getting the music sorted out. I am talking about the deep theological significance hidden in the arrival of many people coming from many places into one place to celebrate the Eucharist. I am talking about the mystery of the assembly.

The Mass begins as the assembly forms, and this is already full of meaning. In the coming together of many people into one place to pray under the headship of their bishop or a priest, we have an acting out in a very concrete way of what the Church is and is meant to be. The word “church” comes from the Greek word “*ecclesia*,” which means “a calling out” and “a calling together.” So, church means those called out from somewhere by God and called together into one place by Him.

Every time we use the word church we should try to remember this sense of the word. The Church is the gathering of those called by God; she is an assembly that God forms and keeps together. The whole Church has gathered; the Church in heaven and on earth, the Church across the world and across the centuries. The Mass prepared from the beginning of the world is about to begin. The meaning of the whole creation and the whole of human history is contained here in ritual form and in the people who enact the ritual. This action will cause the Church to be: to do Eucharist is to be Church. To be Church, to be assembled into one, is what God intends for the world. The Eucharist is celebrated in thanksgiving and for the glory of God, and it is done for the salvation of the whole world.

May God continue to strengthen us as we keep one another in prayer and grow closer to Him through our understanding and participation in the Holy Mass. And may God bless you and your families.

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