

The church's liturgy



In order to tell the world who Jesus is, we have to really know Jesus in our hearts. It is in the liturgy, the prayer of the church, where we most clearly come to know Jesus. We say that when the church gathers for worship, it is Christ who worships.

We see Jesus—and therefore God—in everything. In order to see Jesus in everything, we have to work at developing our imagination. The liturgy is our training camp to help us develop our religious imaginations and become more attuned to the presence of Jesus in every part of our lives.

One key to understanding how this works is to recognize that everything in liturgy is more than it seems. That is, everything in the liturgy is symbolic. The symbols of the liturgy all have a literal, surface meaning. And liturgical symbols mean much more than just what is on the surface. Like the words of a poem or the objects in a painting, the liturgy represents both what it is and something deeper. Word is not just “word,” but the word of God. Water is not just water, but the water of life. Light is not just light, but the light of Christ. Every word, gesture, song, action, and object is part of a living story. It is the story of our faith in Jesus.

The deep meaning of the symbols of the liturgy convey the mystery of Jesus' love and our love for each other.

There are many symbols in the liturgy, but only a relative few that been handed down since the early beginnings of the church. These are the primary symbols we use:

1. Water
2. Cross (crucifix, sign of the cross)
3. Light (candles, fire)
4. Oil
5. Word (book, spoken word, sung word, prayers, Scripture)
6. Altar
7. Bread
8. Wine (cup)
9. Assembly of people (bodies, gestures, congregation, priest, deacon, catechumens)