



## Looking Out My Window, January 28, 2022

Those italicized directions in *The Book of Common Prayer* we call rubrics. In older prayer books, those instructions were in red, hence the word rubric, based on the Latin for red.

Additional instructions and explanations appear before and after worship services as in the baptismal service, page 298, entitled “Concerning the Service.” Those do not appear in italics but offer rubric-like instructions and explanations. The various explanations/instructions and the rubrics themselves offer rather subtle and rich theological and spiritual content.

For example, in the additional instructions for Holy Baptism, we read, “Holy Baptism is full initiation by water and the Holy Spirit into Christ’s Body the Church. The bond which God establishes in Baptism is indissoluble.” (p. 298) Those two sentences compress much theology into a few words. How encouraging to know that God forges an indissoluble bond with us in baptism.

Rubrics also can signal differences in theology and practice within the *Book of Common Prayer*. In Rite 1, after the Sanctus, the rubrics instruct, *The people kneel or stand*. (p. 334). However, in Rite 2, the rubric instructs, *The people may stand or kneel*. (p. 362). Also, worshippers are instructed to kneel for the confession in Rite 1 (p. 330) but not in Rite 2 (p. 360).

The rubrics sometimes use “may” with an instruction, meaning what follows is optional, as in keeping silence before the confession (p. 360). But, in other instances silence is mandatory, as at the fraction. The rubrics read *A period of silence is kept*. (p. 364). Silences afford moments for private prayer and confession, moments of reflection, and can signal a particularly significant moment in the liturgy, as at the fraction.

One other note. When more than one option is offered, the first one always is preferred. So, in Rite 1, kneeling after the Sanctus is preferred, whereas in Rite 2, standing is preferred. At baptism, the first option offered for mode is immersion. Pouring is the second, which means that in our church immersion is the preferred mode of baptism, which actually has been practiced rather consistently in our history (p. 307) And, adults and older children are presented first, before infants, which signals the church’s historic practice of baptizing adults and older children. Infant baptism was a later development.

What fun, exploring those oft neglected italicized lines within the rite and those pages of additional directions before and after.

God’s peace,

*David+*

Fr. David+, Interim Rector